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# MILITARY ILLUSTRATED

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No. 48

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## EDITORIAL

Our Gallery piece this month, on the legendary German tank commander Michael Wittmann, is by **Gregory T. Jones**, a doctor of dental medicine from Granite City, Illinois. Greg, born in 1954, has published articles in various enthusiast magazines including *Four Scale Modeler*, *World War II History* and *HPMS Quarterly*; and continues his research on this subject for a planned book on the Waffen-SS heavy tank detachments.

**Graham Sumner**, who illustrates Paul Holder's fascinating piece on the long-agoed appearance of 3rd century Roman legions, was born in 1958, and gained a diploma in design (illustration) in 1979. He was accepted for full membership of the Association of Archaeological Illustrators and Surveyors in 1990. Since 1983 he has worked for Manchester City Council, being involved with the Castledown Urban Heritage Park, and is pursuing a freelance illustration career. He has made illustrations for the Grosvenor Museum, Chester; Deeves Museum; the Roman Army Museum, Hexham; and English Heritage. Graham joined the Editor's Staff in 1984, but his interests range widely, from ancient Rome up to First World War aviators. He lives in Flim, Cheshire.

### Diary events

We have received a large number of notices for your recent diary this month, so will list them only briefly: 16 May Show by the Alderston Branch



Gregory Jones

of the British Model Soldier Society, at Prince's Hall, Aldershot — no other details supplied.

23 May Open Day, German War Research Society, at the lecture Theatre, National Army Museum, London. Pairing comprehensive judged by Adrian Bay and Derek Hadden, wargame, and talk on the Alma (Ips), together with various displays. Details from David Cliff, 4 Castle Street, Rippin, Sowerby Bridge, W. Yorks LS6 4JY.



Graham Sumner

29-31 May Military vehicle rally by the Solem Area of the Military Vehicle Trust on Southern Common, Portsmouth: arena shows, displays, trade stalls, etc. Details from Clive Perce, 2 Links Rd., Locke Heath, Southampton, Hants SO3 6NT.

6 June Warminster Garrison Summer Show and Military Fair: many arena events (band, parachuting, ECW Society, etc.); military and other vehicle rallies; helicopter, AFV and military rules; trade stands; and access to

the normally closed Infantry Weapons Museum. This is the first such event at Warminster, and some most interesting details from Secretary, Garrison '92, School of Infantry, Warminster, Wilt BA3 0DJ.

And on the same family date, several thousand miles away — the Ontario Model Soldier Society hosts their Hobby Militaire show at the North York Centre, Novotel Hotel, Toronto, Ontario; details of Canada's premier modelling competition and associated displays, seminars, trade area, etc., from Jim or Holly Walker, 1176 Meander Crt., Mississauga, Ont. L4Y 4A8, tel: (416) 279-7514.

2 April-18 October Asperia exhibition to mark the tenth anniversary of the Falklands War is now open at the National Army Museum, Chelsea, London. Details from Julian Humphrys on 071-730-0717, ext. 240. Jon Nilsen will be holding 'firing days' on 10 May, 21 June, 19 July, 9 August, 13 September and 1 November; and special theme days as follows: 28 June, English Civil War Society; 12 July, Charlton & Gillingham Veterans' Auxiliary; 23 August, World War II; 4 October, Military Vehicle Trust; 25 October, modern artillery display. The first, the Royal Armouries' National Museum of Artillery, is on Down End Road, Enfield, Hants, off the M27. Admission is £2.00 or £1.00, parking is free; details from Jon Nilsen on 0329-233734, or Royal Armouries Marketing Dept. on 071-480-6358. **MI**

### NEW EDITOR, NEW ADDRESS

As from the June issue, *Military Illustrated* welcomes a new Editor.

**Bruce Quarrie**, born in London in 1947, should logically have been a naval enthusiast, given that he had a grandfather in submarines in the First World War and a father in MTBs in the Second; however, his interests have always tended towards the army since a lively childhood appetite for modelling and wargaming. Graduating from Peterhouse, Cambridge in 1968, Bruce worked on a variety of magazines before appointment as Editor of the trailblazing *Airfix Magazine* in 1972. Bruce wrote his first book in 1974, and since then has averaged about two each year, for such subjects as *David & Charles*, *Osprey*, *Quintet*, *Salamander*, and *Parkes Stephenson*; and he was for some years a contributing editor for the latter company, running their military list. Other recent work includes major contributions to Marshall Cavendish's *Images of War* portfolio, and several children's books including that for the *Daily Express* production *Gulf History*. The main periods of interest are the English Civil War (he carried a pike in a re-enactment society for several



years, before breaking his neck in battle). The Napoleonic Wars, and the Second World War. Bruce lives in Wellingborough with his wife Margaret and two daughters.

A magazine should be a living, evolving thing; and to have the same 'gaffer' for too long brings a danger of staleness, both for the magazine and for the man. After six years I have decided to concentrate on my book publishing company before (I hope, before) that danger threatens. *MI* has new owners, new printers, the beginnings of a new look, and I am delighted to say, a steady stream of new contributors

alongside our most valued regulars. I believe it is time for a new Editor, but it is a bonus that the man to whom I hand the baton is a professional colleague of some 20 years' standing, who will bring his own skills, experience and contacts to the job; and I look forward with lively interest to watching him lead *MI* to new successes.

Looking back over the years since I conceived *MI* and brought it to publication in 1986, I am proud of what we have achieved together. The response from you, the readers, has thunderously confirmed my belief that there was room on the market for a high-quality magazine for military hobby specialists; and I have always been immensely grateful for your encouragement.

This is also the time to record my gratitude to those dozen or so people (you know who you are) amongst our writers, illustrators, designers and craftsmen I relied upon whenever I needed that 'the Colonel was dead and the General was jammed'. There have been several occasions like that over the years; and you never, ever let me down. *MI* owes a great debt to your professionalism and friendly generosity, and so do I.

Now, the important practicalities: would everyone who does business of any kind with

*MI* please note that as from the appearance of this issue, and as from the June issue, *MI* No. 49, the address for all editorial contacts is: Bruce Quarrie, Military Illustrated, 43 Museum Street, London WC1A 1LY, tel: 071-404-0304, fax: 071-242-1865. This is the address of the printers, Military Illustrated Ltd., and also applies for the business, advertising and accounts offices. In case of urgency Bruce Quarrie can also be reached at 36 Gannet Lane, Wellingborough, Northants NN8 4NW, tel: 0933-675669.

Please also note that the book publishing operations of Windrow & Greene Ltd. are unaffected by these changes, and our address remains 5 Gerrard Street, London W1V 7LJ, tel: 071-287-4570, fax: 071-494-3869.

All editorial material delivered but not yet published has been passed to the new Editor, with all correspondence; all enquiries should be addressed to Bruce Quarrie at the new address.

A final 'thank you' to everyone who has helped make the past six years the kind of experience that money can't buy; and an amen.

Martin Windrow

(20th Century Fox: 15)

At a time when new Second World War movies are comparatively rare, almost any new release deserves some consideration. David Seltzer's *Shining Through* is based on Susan Isaac's bestselling novel about a half-Jewish working class New York girl, Linda Voss (Mekia Griffith) who works in the Information Centre of the War Department. After an affair with OSS Colonel Ed Leland (Michael Douglas) she volunteers to become one of his agents in Berlin, to discover where Hitler's V-weapons are being developed by infiltrating the household of a high-ranking Nazi officer, posing as a cook. Linda is also secretly determined to discover the fate of Jewish relatives last heard of living in Berlin. When her first meal ends in disaster she is dismissed, only to be hired by 'General Dietrich' (Liam Neeson) — no allusion to 'Sepp' is intended — to act as a nanny for his children in Potsdam. Dietrich becomes suspicious, forcing her to seek refuge with Komad Friedrichs (Jolin Gielgud), a legendary secret agent and her first contact in Berlin, and Margrete von Eberstein (Joely Richardson), a glamorous young German woman Linda has learned to trust.

The running time of two and a quarter hours is unnecessarily extended by a badly judged present-day prologue and epilogue. A succession of suspenseful situations maintain interest, but accu-

## ON THE SCREEN

mulating implausibilities render the film as lightweight entertainment.

A high budget has evidently been spent bringing the novel to the screen. The film benefits from excellent location filming in Berlin which adds authenticity; the excellent production values boast some large crowd scenes, including a Heroes' Day parade attended by Hitler, filmed in Potsdam.

### Video Releases to Buy:

'Hitler's Secret Weapons'

(Castle Vision)

'Special Forces' (Castle Vision)

'From Here to Eternity'

(Castle Vision: 15)

A more factual account of the Allied efforts to obtain information concerning the V-weapons can be found in *Hitler's Secret Weapons*, one of two new additions to Castle Vision's *War File* series. The first part deals with the V-1 threat more from the Allied point-of-view, and describes the part played by agents in the field as well as the activities of Dr. R.V. Jones and the Air Intelligence Branch of the Air Ministry in the eventual identification of Peenemünde. The second half deals with the development of the V-2, and includes film of the vast underground factory in Poland where it was manufactured.

The other title is *Special Forces*, which initially considers the operations of the Green Berets in Vietnam, then devotes

most of the remainder of its running time to special units during World War Two. Subjects covered include the German Brandenburg regiment, British Commandos, the Parachute Regiment, the Long Range Desert Group, and Special Operations Executive. Their American counterparts, such as Merrill's Marauders, and the ubiquitous D101 which organised local resistance to the Japanese, are also mentioned. The definition of 'special forces' is thus extremely broad.

The programme briefly considers the qualities required of a member of a Special Forces unit. It describes how Special Forces have habitually been treated with suspicion by regular forces within the same army, subject to inter-service rivalries, and often wasted by being deployed as élite regular forces. These two tapes are, in common with the rest of the series, narrated by actor Patrick Allen.

James Jones' lengthy bestselling novel *From Here to Eternity* concerned a US infantry regiment based at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii during the months preceding Pearl Harbor. Fred Zinnemann's 1953 film version, remembered mainly for Burt Lancaster's passionate clinch in the surf with Deborah Kerr, won eight Oscars. The story was remade as a television mini-series in 1979, directed by veteran director Buzz Kulik and based

both on the original novel and Daniel Taradash's 1953 screenplay. Castle Pictures have now released the mini-series on three 1½-hour tapes.

Steve Railsback plays Pte. Robert E. Lee Prewitt, a bugler who refuses to box for his new company, having once blinded an opponent. Captain Holmes (Roy Thinnes), eager to gain sporting success for his company to increase his chances of promotion, ensures his non-commissioned officers give Prewitt 'The treatment' in an effort to force him to change his mind. However, First Sergeant Milt Warden (William Devane) is more interested in pursuing an affair with Holmes' wife Karen (Natalie Wood), while Prewitt finds physical relief with prostitute Lorene (Kim Basinger). The tensions within the company come to a head when Prewitt's Italian friend Angelo Maggio, a prisoner in the stockade for drunkenness, is driven to his death by the sadistic 'Fats' Judson (Peter Boyle); and the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor.

The series remains reasonably faithful to the novel, the easing of censorship since 1953 allowing Kulik to portray some aspects denied to Zinnemann. Inevitably, the demands of American television necessitate a script that fails to match the novel's intensity of language. However, a good cast and capable direction make this reasonably entertaining viewing. The attack on Pearl Harbor is represented by Zeno's strafing Schofield Barracks, and some brief stock footage from *Tora! Tora! Tora!*.

Stephen J. Greenhill

## THE AUCTION SCENE

group of swords. The estimates range for £800 up to £14,000, for these gleaming masterpieces of the swordsmith's craft have always attracted collectors. The effort taken to make them aesthetically pleasing, as well as being the world's finest cutting weapon, is reflected in the design and quality of the various fittings. The *tsubas*, oval guards at the base of the hilt, are such little treasures that they have been collected in their own right for many years — although it is sad to think of how many swords have been rendered incomplete by their removal. *Tsubas* vary in price but it is not unusual for a single top quality example to run into four figures.

The Phillips sale mentioned above included a number of other interesting and unusual helmets, such as one from the glamorous Indian regiment, the Scinde Horse, which achieved £1,600; and a shako of the 5th Regiment of Foot made £1,400. There was also a good selection of pistols and other weapons, including a fine cased pair of flintlock duelling pistols by W. Parker which fetched £2,600.

The Park Lane Arms Fair was held on Sunday 6 February; this fair is basically aimed at the more expensive end of the arms and armour market. There was a fairly full attendance in the morning but the number of visitors declined from mid-day. Many of the top dealers were present, but they

did not seem to be doing a great deal of business — although it is always difficult to be sure, since most tend to keep their business confidential.

Sotheby's were at the Fair exhibiting a very fine Lloyd's Patriotic Fund £50 sword. This one was presented to a Royal Navy lieutenant for a boat action in Martinique which took place in November 1804. This sword will be included in their Marine Sale to be held in May. The idea of theme sales is a popular one at the moment, and Sotheby's plan to hold similar sales with the emphasis on aviation and military items later in the year.

The Park Lane Fair always produces a good quality guide and this one contained an interesting mixture of articles. The next big London Arms Fair is to be held a little later in the year than usual, on the 1 and 2 May at the Earls Court Park International. The venue may seem different but it is in fact the usual location for this fair — the old Ramada Inn has been re-named.

Weller & Duffly and Bonhams both have sales later in March; but the next outstandingly important sale of arms and armour will be at Christie's early in April, when they hold the first part of a two-session auction. They will be selling the contents of the castle armoury of the Princes Zu Salm-Reifferscheidt-Dyck, a collection consisting of some 700 pieces, many of which have been there since the

17th century. It is both sad and pleasing when such a collection is sold: sad, because a group of objects which has been together for centuries is being broken up, but pleasing since it offers collectors a chance to acquire some very interesting pieces. The catalogue is a hard cover production, lavishly illustrated in colour, with full descriptions of the numerous wheellocks and other pieces.

This year sees the 300th anniversary of the outbreak of the English Civil War and to mark the occasion the Royal Armouries have put together a travelling exhibition which will visit a number of towns with important associations with the Civil War. The exhibition will include some unique pieces and will also offer visitors the opportunity to handle some of the exhibits. It will be interesting to see if the exhibition and the celebrations of the anniversary affect the supply and prices of English 17th century material. It will be surprising if they do not, since past experience suggests that such outside events do stimulate interest and can create a demand for items associated with the occasion. Phillips' sale included the lobster tail helmet of a Civil War barquebusier, which sold for £520. Kent Sales also reports that re-enactment groups seem to be buying more genuine material. The signs are that 17th century material will almost inevitably increase in value or, perhaps to be more precise, in price.

Frederick Wilkinson

As far as the auction houses were concerned February opened quietly, but the pace soon bottled up; and on the 27th Phillips had a very attractive sale with some fine lots. Two pieces, created on opposite sides of the world, reflected similar military thinking. Both were helmets designed to impress an opponent as well as affording some protection to the wearer. One was a Tarleton helmet, the design dating from the late 18th century and named after a British cavalry commander, and worn in this case by a member of the 16th Light Dragoons. It has a leather skull with a central, upstanding crest of black bear fur and a wrap-around red silk turban; it is also one of the earliest of military headdress to carry a metal badge. This rare piece sold for £3,200. The other is a Japanese helmet made in the 19th century in the style of the late 14th century. Its rather complex metal skull is composed of 32 separate plates and is embellished with colour, a gold mask and a crest with two prominent upstanding arms. Part of a complete armour made in the 19th century in the style of a famous 14th century panoply, it lacked a few pieces, but even so sold to the Royal Armouries at the Tower of London for £14,000. At the other end of the material from Japan, a World War II Japanese officer's sword, *shon a-to*, realised £200.

Japanese pieces seem to hold their value well despite the fluctuations of the market, and Sotheby's sale, in late March, of Japanese works of art, screens and paintings includes a fine

# 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, 1942-45 (I)

EDWARD STOREY

Preparations for the formation of the unit began some weeks before the official approval was given. Two small groups of officers and men were selected for training in the United States and the United Kingdom. The plan was to evaluate the best features of parachute training and use them in Canada. The call for volunteers went out to existing military units, and arrangements were made to have a small cadre of men assemble overseas to be trained at the RAF Parachute Training School, Ringway. Those in Canada were sent to the Fort Benning Parachute School in the United States. In the meantime, plans were made to establish a jump training centre at Camp Shilo, Manitoba. As a result of several delays this facility was not ready until 22 March 1943; so training commenced at Fort Benning on 12 October 1942, and weekly thereafter until 14 December 1942.

At first the flow of volunteers was slow, primarily because many enlisted personnel believed the unit was for home defence and stood little chance of overseas service. This problem was eventually resolved by making effective on 30 November 1942 that all personnel in the 1st Canadian

The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion was Canada's first airborne unit, being formed on 1 July 1942. Getting to that stage had not been an easy matter. A Canadian airborne formation had been proposed as early as August 1940. No facilities were available in Canada, and equipment shortages were a major problem; but despite these and a host of other smaller problems that were eventually worked out, a Parachute Battalion was formed consisting of a battalion headquarters, headquarters company and three rifle companies, with a total strength of 26 officers and 590 other ranks.

Parachute Battalion be required to be 'active'. The change was profound; large numbers of active service personnel immediately volunteered, and were screened by the unit. Most volunteers fell into three categories:

(1) Those who were in a home instructional role and saw the Battalion as a way out of a non-combat position into a unit that would probably see active service. This was generally a well-motivated group of instructor officers and NCOs with a thorough knowledge of infantry work, and it was this group that provided the nucleus of the Battalion officers.

(2) The second and largest group consisted of young, excitement-hungry volunteers who saw the unit as an élite corps with an

element of prestige and glamour. On the whole, most of the Battalion came from this group.

(3) The third and final group was made up of individuals who did not fit into other units and for various reasons volunteered for the Parachute Battalion as a last chance. With a few exceptions, most of this group were 'weeded out' during the selection process or the training that followed.

## TRAINING

The parachute training at Fort Benning, Georgia was a four-week course that qualified the trainee for parachute wings. The first week was devoted to physical training, designed to build stamina and 'wash out' those who lacked the discipline or strength to continue.

Week two continued the physical training, as well as introducing the trainees to the techniques required for a successful jump. Several pieces of equipment were

designed for this task, such as the 35-foot mock tower. This represented the 'fear height' for most people, and consisted of a trolley on an overhead cable. The candidate was hooked to the trolley in a harness and jumped from the tower in a free-fall until the slack was taken up; he then proceeded down the overhead cable until reaching the ground.

Stage three consisted of using the 250-foot towers that provided the initial sensation of a parachute jump with a controlled descent to the ground. Later on candidates made a parachute drop from the tower using an open chute, to train them in landing techniques. The final stage of training was the required five successful jumps from an aircraft. Prior to this, candidates received instruction in packing and checking the parachute as well as aircraft exit procedures.

Not all trainees at Fort Benning remained with the Battalion. A substantial number of volunteers were taken into what is sometimes referred to as the '2nd Canadian Parachute Battalion'; this battalion ultimately became part of the unique Canadian-American 1st Special Service Force ('MI' No. 1 and 2) that moved to Fort Harrison, Montana for special training on 7 December 1942.

In mid-January 1943 the training took an interesting twist: American parachute techniques and equipment were used, but the infantry training and weapons were of Canadian nature. In March 1943 the Battalion moved

Lt. Col. G.E.P. Bradbrooke (left), CO from the formation of 1st Can. Para Bn., and his 2IC, Maj. J.A. Nicklin, later to succeed to command and to die in Operation 'Varsity', 5 Jan. 1944, Belford. Both wear announce pins in their '37 holsters, and double magazine pouches. The CO wears web anklets and ankle boots. Maj. Nicklin the US jump boots acquired as a result of training at Fort Benning. (Public Archives DND 27884)

Maj. Clancy and CSM Green: the former wears printed sleeve insignia, and Canadian parachute wings above the ribbon of the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, on his BD blouse. The WO wears wings and warrant badge worn to his Division snook. (DND Directorate of History PMR 83-073)









**(A) Reconstruction:** Private, 1st Can. Para Bn. on leave, UK. Brass cap badge on mouson heavi; embroidered mouson sleeve badges; gold shoulder strap and Canadian jump wings on BD blouse; Canadian BD trousers; '37 Pattern web belt; US parachute boots.

**(B)** Fusilier on Canadian BD blouse once worn by Pte. G.R. Leigh, all in embroidered form for 'best' wear. Note jump wings; shoulder strap strip; mouson battalion shoulder flash; mouson Airborne Forces patch and tuck. The latter, removed after D-Day, was worn back for the return to Canada. Leigh's full ribbon bar displays 1939-45 Star, France & Germany Star, Defence Medal, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with clasp, and War Medal 1939-45.

**(C) Reconstruction:** Battalion sniper in light partial kit; Wally Galant wears the beret with plastic hair, camouflage face veil as scarf; Denison smock with Canadian wings, issue binoculars, windproof camouflage trousers, and US boots; the rifle is the Canadian-made Lee-Enfield No.4 Mk.I\*(T) with British-made 1944 dated US M1910 leather sling.

**(D) Reconstruction:** patrol order; note plastic beret badge; wings and gold shoulder strip on Denison smock; Canadian BD trousers; web gaiters and ankle boots; British 1944-dated web bandolier for five Sten magazines; 6ft. toggle rope; and Mk.V Sten.

**(E), (F) and front cover:** **Reconstruction:** Battalion rifleman in NW Europe, 1944-45. Dave Dowling wears scrim-corded parachute helmet with web harness; camouflage face veil as scarf; Denison with wings and shoulder strip; '37 Pattern webbing battle order; toggle rope; 50-round cotton bandolier for .303 rifle clips; Airborne pattern BD trousers (now thigh pocket); web gaiters and ankle boots. The rifle is the Canadian-made Lee-Enfield No.4 Mk.I\*.

**(G) Reconstruction:** Battalion junior officer. Bob Douk wears identical kit to the rifleman, except for binoculars, compact map case, Mk.V Sten, and US M1911A1 .45 cal. pistol in '37 Pattern holster attached to pistol ammunition pouch on left of belt. Just visible, red-backed rank 'pip' on shoulder strap. (All items in these photos, W.E. Storry Colln.)



to Camp Shilo, Manitoba; and Canada had her Parachute Battalion. The first Commanding Officer of the Battalion was Lt. Col. G.E.P. Bradbrooke, formerly of the Saskatoon Light Infantry; and his emphasis for the fledgling battalion was skill and efficiency in arms and realism in training. These aims were met; the problem was now what to do with the Battalion.

By 1943 an attack on the North American Continent by the Axis was highly unlikely. National Defense Headquarters in Ottawa felt that it was logical to integrate the Battalion with the British Airborne Forces. At this time the British 6th Airborne Division was being brought up to strength, and the Canadian offer was most welcome. The Battalion would remain part of the Canadian Army, but command would be under the British 6th Airborne Division.

Once the legal and administrative details had been ironed out the way was clear for the Battalion to move to the United Kingdom for additional training and integration with the British 3rd Parachute Brigade. Authorization to include the Battalion with the British 6th Airborne Division was given on 7 April 1943. The intention was also to provide the unit with a further two months' training to bring it up to standard for active service. This would include jump training using British techniques and techniques. Earlier on, part of the Battalion had been exposed to British methods prior to the decision to adopt American techniques. Canadian jump training at Shilo would remain similar to that of the United States, with all qualified jumpers to receive British parachute training following their arrival in the United Kingdom. The remainder of the training would be battle and battalion training as part of a larger force.

### OVER TO BRITAIN

In late July 1943 the Battalion, 31 officers and 548 other ranks strong, travelled to Halifax and then sailed for the United Kingdom on the Queen Elizabeth. After initial leave and a unit move the Battalion was based at Carter Barracks, Bullford, where general training would take place. As part of the British 6th Abn. Div. the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion would play an important role in the Allied invasion of France; and a training programme was prepared to upgrade the skills needed for this task. This embraced, as mentioned, not only physical fitness and weapons, but conversion to British methods of parachuting and operational jumping. The

April 1944: Lt. R.C. Hilborn is helped to adjust his harness prior to a balloon jump in England by Maj. Hon. H. Fraser (Lord Lovat's brother). Note 'lumpy' training helmets. The major (left) wears a Denison smock, BD trousers, British web and leather anklets and ankle boots. The lieutenant wears the denim Oversmock, denim trousers, Canadian all-weather anklets, and what appear to be private purchase boots. (DND 31665)

significant differences were: that British parachutes did not employ a reserve, and opened differently from the T5 (US) assembly; in training the exit was through the floor of a converted Whitley Bomber, as opposed to the side exit of a C47 Dakota; in training, moored balloons were used instead of towers; and parachutes were packed by specially trained women instead of the jumpers themselves.

During this time, in August 1943, the Battalion was authorized to wear a distinctive 1/2in. wide gold band at the base of the shoulder strap on all uniforms. This was to distinguish the Battalion from the remainder of the Division.

As part of the 3rd Parachute Brigade one of the Battalion's goals was to be able to march 50 miles in 18 hours; this was achieved on 19 November 1943. After December 1943 the training included several mass drops and field exercises; for these drops both American and British aircraft were used together. Familiarization with German tactics and weapons were also taught, and each man was given the opportunity to inspect various enemy weapons.

With the mobilization order of the Division on 23 December 1943 some additional legal difficulties occurred. Could the British War Office legally mobilize a Canadian unit; and could a Canadian unit act in combination with a British unit outside of the United Kingdom as well as within? Both problems were eventually solved by mobilizing the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion on 29 February 1944; and by the issuance of an Order of Detail from the Chief of Staff, Canadian Military Headquarters on 20 March 1944 which made the Battalion automatically in combi-

December 1943: Gen. Paget, C-in-C Home Forces, visits the battalion. The three battalion officers wear BD open over shirts and ties, and field equipment. This photo proves that the parachute helmet with webbing chin-straps was already in use at this early date — see left hand man. The general wears the dark-on-pale-blue 'Parachute Regiment' tunic.



Reconstruction: Chris Boursquet models the denim Oversmock worn over the Denison and all equipment to prevent snagging on the deploying parachute shroud lines. The Denison itself was originally designed for this function, but was replaced by the Oversmock. (W.E. Storey Colln.)







**Left:**

Johnny, the battalion mascot, with Sgt. Peter Kowalski after the dog's first parachute jump: 13 February 1944. Kowalski wears the plastic battalion cap badge, wings and rank insignia on his Denison (stripes are seen in other photos worn on both sleeves), and — a rare sight — the Airborne pattern BD trousers with bellows thigh pocket. (DND 29431)

**Above:**

Dated 5 January 1944, this photo confirms that the Mk.V Sten was available for use on D-Day. This man's helmet has the early leather chin strapping. (DND 27916)

nation for service within and without the United Kingdom as a unit in the 21st Army Group.

On 15 May 1944 a visit to the 1st Canadian Parachute Training Company was conducted by HM King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. With the invasion day drawing near the level of preparation intensified, and by 24 May the Battalion left Billford and arrived at transit camp, Down Ampney, where they were confined to camp until they flew to France.

#### **NORMANDY**

Late on 5 June 1944 the Battalion took off, with 50 aircraft carrying the troops and equipment headed for France. Following the massive bombardment of the invasion area, the British forces were to land in the eastern sector on the beaches west of Ouistreham, their objective being Caen. The 6th Abn. Div.'s mission was to protect the left flank of the British sector. The 1st Can. Para Bn. was to protect the flanks of the 3rd Brigade's operational area; the Battalion's tasks were as follows:

(1) Secure and protect the 3rd Para Bde. drop zone by the destruction of an enemy headquarters at Virville as well as any other enemy in the area; (2) destroy the bridge at Virville by

using ammo on the range, also on 5 January 1944. All these riflemen wear parachute helmets with nets and light canvas; Denison smocks — note corporal's chevrons, left; Canadian BD trousers, anklets, ankle boots and web fighting order. For some reason the corporal has an old No. 1 Mk.III SMLE with long 1907 bayonet; the No. 4 Mk.I\* rifle was clearly not yet universal issue. He also holds a 1943 Light Respirator. (DND 27898)



11+2 hours and cover the destruction until relieved by the 1st Special Service Brigade not before H+5 hours; (3) destroy the bridges at Rohrborn by H+2 hours and cover the demolition; (4) cover the move to and the assault on the Merville Battery by the 9th Para Bn. from interference from the south; and (5) seize and hold the road junction where the 3rd Para Bde. Headquarters would be located.

The paratroopers landed between 0100 and 0130 hrs. on 6 June 1944. Due to navigation problems, dead reckoning and anti-aircraft fire, the groups were dispersed over a somewhat wider area than had been anticipated. This dispersal on the drop resulted in the loss of most of the Battalion's heavy equipment along with 80 men, who were taken prisoner. The early morning drop gained the Battalion the distinction of being the first Canadian unit on the ground in France.

In spite of the handicaps, all objectives were quickly attained; a tribute to the hardness of the men as well as their excellent training and briefing. By noon on D-Day the whole Division was firm on its objectives. This began several months of relatively static warfare between the Orne and Dives Rivers, as the paratroopers were used as conventional infantry to hold off determined counterattacks by superior German forces. It should be noted that the Americans usually treated their Airborne forces as specialized units, and withdrew them from the line once the immediate mission was accomplished.

Between 4 and 20 July 1944 the Battalion, having sustained 300 casualties since D-Day, was reinforced by seven officers and 100 other ranks, who had not been parachute-trained, from the Canadian Reinforcement Unit. Reinforcement in the field with infantry personnel was a matter of policy, as the Training Company was retained in being in the United Kingdom as a reserve for future airborne operations. At the end of the Battalion's involvement in the Normandy campaign reinforcements were withdrawn for posting to other units.

On 23 August 1944, Lt. Col. Bradbrooke relinquished command temporarily to Maj. G.F. Eadie. Following the rapid advance to the Risle River the Division, less the 1st and 4th Special Service Brigades, was ordered into 21st Army Group reserve on 30 August 1944. The 1st Can. Para Bn. returned to Bulford, England, by 7 September 1944, and the following day command was assumed

*A thin but interesting photograph which regains study: two members of the Signals Section, Pte. C. 'Texas' Hensen (left), one of only two blacks in the battalion and Pte. J.F. Haughan. Haughan can be seen to wear — very rarely in the photographic record — Airborne BD trousers; note large and crumpled left thigh pocket, and in this case the FS Knife slung outside. (DND D Hist PAIR 83-096)*

by Lt. Col. J.A. Nicklin. The Battalion was rebuilt from parachute-trained reinforcements from the Training Company, and carried on training for future airborne operations. (The parachute reinforcement system was working as planned, and by 1 January 1945 the Training Company was holding a strength of 694 all ranks; being filled by drafts from the school at Shilo, it was able to maintain the Battalion up to strength.)

### THE ARDENNES AND THE RHINE

The Battalion was suddenly warned again for operations on 20 December 1944 and departed Folkestone for Ostende, Belgium, on Christmas Day, but this time by sea on the SS *Cantonbury*. On 2 January 1945 they arrived in Rochefort, where the Battalion made preparation for battle only to realize, with great disappointment, that the enemy had decided to retreat. Operating under British XXX Corps, the 6th Abn. Div. was deployed as part of the Allied opposition to the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes which had begun on 16 December 1944. The 1st Can. Para Bn. was the only Canadian unit to be in contact with the enemy during the 'Battle of the Bulge'; and during this time suffered few casualties, considering the length of time spent in the field. Active opera-

#### Right middle:

*Capt. P.G. Castigan, the battalion MO, leans on an Airborne Folding Stretcher after a tiring march to Breda, Germany, in early 1945. Note RCAMC beret badge, captain's rank 'slip-ons' with the battalion's gold stripe on the Denison shoulder straps, binoculars and sidearm; the trousers are standard BD pattern. (DND D Hist PAIR 83-073)*

#### Bottom right:

*Lt. Col. G.F. Eadie, CO after the death of Col. Nicklin at the Rhine crossing, inspects men of B Company. He can be seen to wear shoulder straps ranking above the gold stripe, the battalion flash as at (B) on the accompanying colour pages, and the Pegasus patch, but not the Airborne title. The men wear parachute helmets with web chinstraps, and Denisons with Canadian BD trousers. (DND D Hist PAIR 83-139)*





nions were conducted from 2 to 18 January 1945; the Battalion moved to positions on the Maas River on 22 January, when the Division was transferred to British VIII Corps control. The Battalion returned to the United Kingdom on 23 February 1945.

On 7 March 1945, the Battalion returned from leave to start training for what would be its last airborne operation of the war. Operation 'Varsity', the crossing of the Rhine, consisted of utilizing the American 17th and the British 6th Abn. Divs. in a combined parachute-glider attack to seize and hold wooded ground which overlooked the Rhine at the planned crossing site. This force would prevent the enemy from holding and using this ground to hinder the crossing, as well as preventing enemy reinforcements from reaching the river from the east of Wesel. The 5th Para Bde. was designated to land to the north-west of Hamminkeln, and the 3rd Para Bde. would be dropped in the

north-west corner of the Piersbacher Wald.

The plan called for Allied artillery to bombard the whole landing zone prior to the airborne landing, to deny enemy armour and heavy artillery a chance to isolate and destroy the airborne force as it tried to land — a vital lesson learned at great cost to the British 1st Abn. Div. at Arnhem the previous September. Operation 'Varsity' involved some 10,000 reconnaissance, bomber, fighter, parachute, and tug aircraft and gliders all converging on one area at one time.

On 23 March 1945, the surface assault began, with the airborne assault starting on the morning of 24 March. The drop took over three hours to complete; and the battle continued until about noon, by which time Battalion positions had been gradually consolidated and the enemy pushed back. It was on this day that the Battalion's only Victoria Cross was won by Cpl. F.G. 'Tuppy' Topham, a medical orderly who,

though wounded, repeatedly went into exposed areas to give aid to injured comrades. Also on that day, Lt. Col. Nicklin was killed when he landed in some trees just above an enemy machine gun nest. Command was assumed once more by Maj. G.F. Eadie, who was later promoted and continued in command for the duration of the war. Losses for the operation were comparatively light, indicating that the lessons from Normandy and Arnhem had been learned.

The successful assault was followed by rapid expansion of the Rhine bridgehead until 29 March 1945. On 1 April the 6th Abn. Div. came under command of British VIII Corps, and the following day began the rapid advance to the Elbe, covering 200 miles by 24 April. On 30 April the Elbe was crossed, with Airborne troops advancing at top speed to occupy Wismar on the Baltic Sea by 2 May. It was there that the Battalion linked up with Soviet troops advancing westwards. By 9

May 1945 all organized German resistance had ended, and the surrender was signed.

After a victory celebration in Germany, the Battalion was returned to Britain by 21 May 1945. The Battalion left for Canada in mid-June, and arrived in Halifax on 21 June; the first Canadian unit to return home from overseas service. After a month's leave the Battalion reassembled at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario; and with the end of the Pacific War in August, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion was disbanded on 30 September 1945.

The Battalion is perpetuated in the Canadian Army by the infantry commandos of the Canadian Airborne Regiment, whose Colours carry the battle honours: Normandy Landing, Dives Crossing, The Rhine, North-West Europe 1944-1945. **[M]**

**To be continued:** Part 2 of this article will discuss and illustrate in detail the uniform and insignia items peculiar to the Battalion.

*The battalion at Lathre, Germany, on the advance to Wismar, supported by British armour: here an Achilles 17-pdr. SP loading a Churchill. The paratroopers wear fighting order. (DND D His PMR 83-113)*



# LEGIO II PARTHICA: A Third Century Legion

DR. PAUL HOLDER  
Paintings by GRAHAM SUMNER

Most of this new knowledge is a result of the work of Belgian archaeologists, led by Professor J. Ch. Bahy, at Apamea in Syria<sup>(1)</sup>. In 1986 and 1987 the team dismantled one of the towers on the city wall and revealed over 100 inscriptions; of these 76 related to *Legio II Parthica* (one of Septimius' new legions). These, and others found in Italy and elsewhere, make it one of the best documented legions in the 3rd century, especially visually. These new inscriptions should be published in full in the near future<sup>(2)</sup>.

## HISTORY OF THE LEGION

The three *legiones Parthicae* were raised by Septimius Severus in the aftermath of his defeat of Pescennius Niger, as part of his preparations in 194/5 for war against Parthia. Breaking with tradition, the personnel were not recruited in Italy but from those who had fought on either side in the recent civil war<sup>(3)</sup>. *Legiones I* and *III Parthica* had a strong Eastern element, and were stationed beyond the Euphrates; after Septimius' second Parthian War they formed the garrison of the new double-legion province of Mesopotamia, based at Singara and Nisibis. Unfortunately they have left little evidence of their existence.

By contrast, *Legio II Parthica* was taken from the East by Septimius and probably accompanied him in the war against Clodius Albinus (AD 197). This suggests that more experienced men, mainly Westerners, may

The image of the imperial legions as depicted on state monuments like Trajan's Column is well known: that the late Roman army was far different in appearance is clear. The period of transition is most likely to centre in the army reforms of Septimius Severus (r. AD 197-211), who greatly improved the social conditions of the army and increased the size of the reserve in Italy. But how his legions are likely to have looked has not been clear — until the past few years. Pausing in our continuing series of articles on the Flavian legionary by Daniel Peterson, we examine here this new evidence.

have been recruited to the legion. After the battle of Lugdunum it then returned to the East for Septimius' second Parthian War (AD 198). By the end of this campaign the legion was highly regarded, and it became part of the emperor's central reserve force. A new legionary fortress was built for it at Alba, 13 miles south of Rome. From then on the legion, along with the Praetorian Guard, the Urban Cohorts, the *equites singulares* (imperial horse guards) and other troops based at Rome, would accompany the emperor when he went on campaign.

By the end of the 3rd century the role of the legion had been changed. It was moved from Italy to the East to become part of the reinforced garrisons along the Euphrates. The *Notitia Dignitatum* places all three *legiones Parthicae* in this area at the end of the 4th century (Not. Dig. Or. XXXVI. 29 and 30; Not. Dig. Or. XXXV. 25).

## ORGANISATION AND OFFICERS

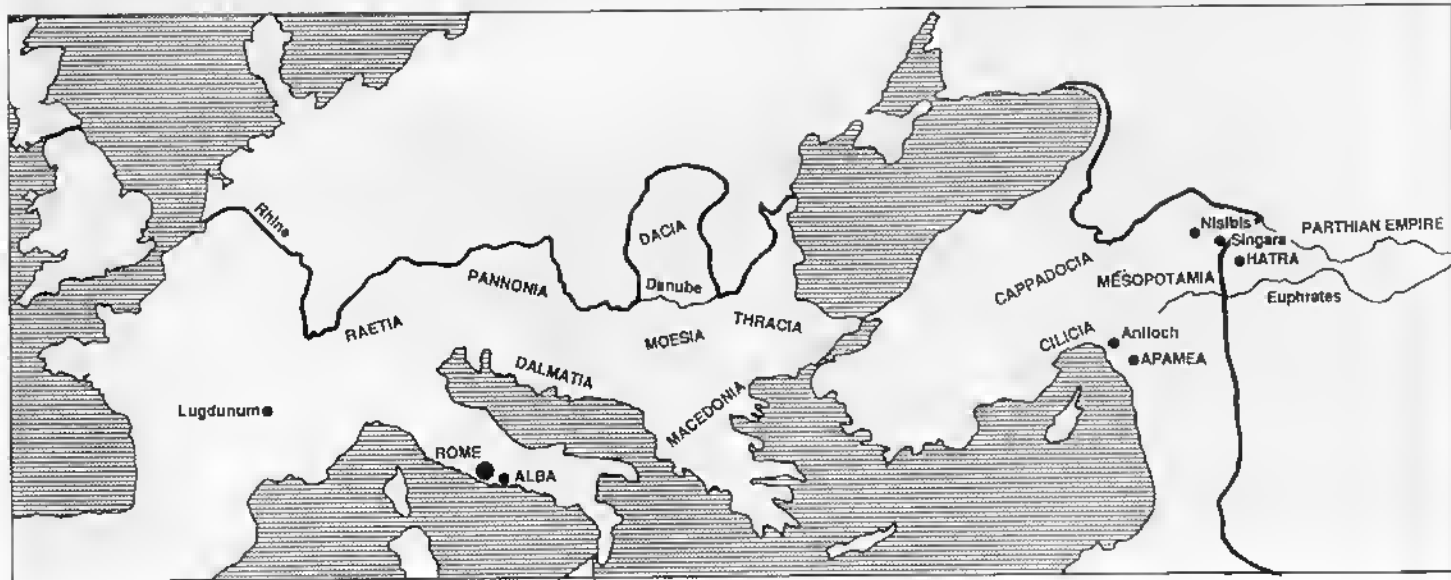
In the early 2nd century a legion

was divided into nine cohorts each of 480 men, plus a first cohort of double strength. There is some evidence that the organisation was changing during the century. During the second siege of Hatra by Septimius Severus in the winter of AD 198 a breach was made. The assault, however, was held back to let the Harranis sue for peace. Instead they filled the breach overnight. When Septimius ordered the renewed assault the European troops refused, and the Syrians who did advance were destroyed. At that point an officer 'told the emperor he could finish the job if he could have a mere 550 European soldiers'<sup>(4)</sup>. Septimius refused, and the siege was called off. This figure of 550 is virtually the same as the 555 Vegetius gives for the normal cohort strength of the legion he describes<sup>(5)</sup>. For this part of his handbook he was using Tarratienus Paternus as his source: the latter, apart from writing a military manual, was a Praetorian Prefect under Commodus and was executed during that emperor's reign. The increase in cohort size seems to

have originated on the Danube frontier during the reign of Marcus Aurelius<sup>(6)</sup>. How quickly the changeover spread is unknown, but the new legions raised by Septimius would have been formed on this model.

Another change within the legions during this period was the method of designating the centuries, which tended to take on an impersonal nature rather than being named after the centurion. This was connected with the increased use of legionary vexillations to form expeditionary armies<sup>(7)</sup>. *Legio II Parthica* was particularly affected, and its men used an idiomatic style with the word 'cohort' omitted: e.g. *centuria noni principis posterioris* (century of the ninth *principis posterioris*). Centuries of cohorts I, II, IV, VI, VII and IX are those most frequently attested on inscriptions at Alba and Apamea. The result is that few centuries are known by name, though two are known from inscriptions recording their careers.

G. Valerius Maximus moved from a centurionate in the legion to one in *V Fenata* in Palestine, probably on an occasion when *II Parthica* was at Apamea; and subsequently to one in *XIV Gemina* in Lower Pannonia, in which point he died (CIL III 10610). Petronius Fortunatus' fifty years in the army included 13 centurionates before he retired to his home in Africa. His eleventh was in *XV Apollinaris* in Cappadocia, his twelfth in *II Parthica*, and his last in *I Adiutrix* in Upper





### Table of recorded deployments of Legio II Parthica

Date	Campaign	Emperor	Evidence
AD 208-211	Scotland	Septimius Severus	Assumed
AD 213	Germany	Caracalla	Inscription
AD 215-218	Parthia	Caracalla and Macrinus	Literary + Apamea inscriptions
AD 218	Civil War	Macrinus v. Elagabalus	
AD 231-233	Parthia	Severus Alexander	Literary + Apamea inscriptions
AD 235	Germany	Severus Alexander, then Maximinus Thrax	Inscription
AD 236-238	Illyricum, and Civil War culminating in siege of Aquileia	Maximinus Thrax	Literary
AD 242-244	Persia	Gordian III, then Philip the Arab	Apamea inscriptions
AD 260-261	Illyricum	Gallienus	Coins + inscriptions

Sculptured tombstone of Verinus Marinus at Apamea (c. AD 217-220); he was serving as a clerk on the legion commander's staff when he died. He can still be seen to wear a long-sleeved tunic belted at the waist, with a ring buckle; he holds a scroll in his right hand and a cylindrical document case in his left. (Photo J. Ch. Balty)



Pannonia (ILS 2658). Only one career of a centurion from the ranks of the legion is known. An unknown man served as an *eques* for four years before spending a further four as a *protector* and then 13 as an *optio*. Finally he was promoted to a centurionate, and died a year later, aged 43, at Apamea, where he was buried by his wife Marcia Vivian Crescensina (AE 1974n648). Also at Apamea, the centurion Probius Sanctus buried his wife Antonia Kara (AE 1974n647). Another centurion on campaign with his family was a Batavian who buried his son of eight months, 11 days and four hours on 27 September AD 244 at Cnidus in Asia (CIL III 14403a).

As commanders of the legions he raised, Septimius Severus appointed equestrian officers with the rank of prefect instead of senatorial legionary legates. This was for two main reasons. *Legiones I and III Parthicae* formed the garrison of the province of Mesopotamia, which had an equestrian governor. Secondly, *Legio II Parthica*, based in Italy, came under the jurisdiction of the Praetorian Prefects, who were the most important equestrian officials in the service of the emperor. The emperor would need to ensure the commander of the latter legion was trustworthy because of its key role on foreign expeditions. This is made obvious by the actions of the first attested prefect, Aelius Tricciannus. When Macrinus, the senior Praetorian Prefect, hatched his plot against Caracalla in AD 217 during the Parthian War, among the main conspirators were Tricciannus; the commander of the *Miscene Fleet*, Marcian Agrippa; and probably the commander of the *equites singulares*. As a reward for his part Tricciannus was 'adlected' into the senate by Macrinus, and appointed governor of Lower Pannonia. T. Licinius Hierocles is the next attested prefect, in the early 220s. He is styled *praefectus legionis...vice legati* (prefect of the legion...in place of a legate) on his career inscription (ILS 1356). The title appears to be the technically correct one for an equestrian prefect commanding a legion. The only other known commander is Claudius Silvianus, who is recorded as prefect in AD 249 (AE 1913n219).

The commander of a legion had an *officium* (staff) which comprised not just administrators but anyone in his service, such as orderlies. On tombstones at Apamea three men are described as members of the staff of a legionary legate in command of *II Parthica*. Aurelius Tato was a *strator legati legionis* (groom, AE 1971n469); Verinus Marinus a

*librarius officii legati legionis* (clerk); and the other was an *exactus libarii legati legionis* (accountant). This evidence would indicate that a senatorial legate was in command when they died. On the tombstone of the accountant the legion bears the honorary epithet *Antoniniana*, which dates it to the period AD 215-217 or AD 218-222. Over the first timespan Aelius Tricciannus, a known equestrian prefect, was in command. The latter period covers the reign of Elagabalus, and it is known that the legion had returned to Rome by AD 220 (CIL VI 31058). So it would seem that either Macrinus or Elagabalus decided to appoint a senator as commander to take the legion away from the jurisdiction of the Praetorian Prefects after the experience with Tricciannus. There were precedents for such a course of action. *Legio II Traiana* was commanded by a prefect in Egypt because no senators were allowed in that province. However, a senatorial legate was appointed when the legion was on campaign anywhere else. For *II Parthica* it would mean that on its return to Italy the legate would have been replaced by a prefect, possibly Licinius Hierocles. It is also feasible that when the legion was at Apamea in the reign of Severus Alexander (AD 231-233) a legate was again in charge.

### RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION

Recruits to *Legio II Parthica* were drawn mainly from the Danube, especially Pannonia and Thrace, although Italians are still to be found early on. Prior to the finds at Apamea in the 1980s, 23 Thracians, seven Italians and 11 men from the Danube were known. Other soldiers had bland names from which no origin can be deduced. Preliminary results for recruitment from the Apamea inscriptions have added an Italian, a Dalmatian, at least 17 Thracians, and a minimum of ten men with Greek names like Tryphon and Zeno, who came either from Greek cities in Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia or from Asia Minor.

Once enrolled, the soldier served for 25 or 26 years before being discharged, when he received a cash bonus of 3,000 *denarii*. A soldier could be honourably discharged before time because of sickness or wounds (*ex causa missa honesta missione*), as happened to Aurelius Dassius, who completed only 19 years of service (CIL XIV 2283). The veteran was then entitled to settle where he wished. Thus Dassius settled at Alba — as did many others like Aurelius Dizapor, a Thracian (CIL XIV 2284) —

rather than returning home. Others did return to their home provinces: Anrelins Neon (AE 1965n322) and Helvius Conon (ILS 8877) went back to Cilicia, and Aurelius Lucius retired to his home at Philippi in Macedonia (AE 1938n56).

A quarter of a century is a long time to be in the army, but Septimius Severus had improved conditions for serving soldiers. He had given them their first pay rise for over a hundred years, to 450 *denarii* a year — an increase of a half. At the same time he permitted serving soldiers legally to marry during their service, and allowed couples to live in the settlements outside the base. Thus at Alba wives commemorated deceased husbands, such as Claudia Firmina, who with her son Aelius Firminus buried her husband Aelius Marcellus, aged 47 years with 26 years' service (CIL XIV 2269). Because of high infant mortality there are numerous instances of soldiers setting up tombstones for young children: thus Anrelins Comastus buried his son Anrelins Victor, aged four years and nine months (CIL XIV 2281). Family relationships also reveal close links between *II Parthica* and the Praetorian Guard, whose men came mostly from the Danube; there are inscriptions recording members of the same family in the Guard and the legion. For example Marius Marcellinus, from Dacia, served in *II Parthica* and his brother Gemellinus was a retired Praetorian (CIL VI 3277). Similarly C. Iulius Glaus, from Poetovio in Upper Pannonia, served in *II Parthica* while one brother was a Praetorian veteran and another was in an Urban Cohort (CIL VI 2579).

This close relationship is also revealed in appointments which have been considered as the prerogative of Praetorians in the 3rd century now being revealed in the legion at an early date. Bodyguards of the Praetorian Prefects were called *protectores* in the 3rd century, and were drawn from the Guard or, in some cases, from the *equites singulares*. In addition two *protectores* are now known from *II Parthica* (AE 1968n106, AE 1974n648). Although it is not explicitly stated, they were most likely bodyguards of the Prefects rather than of the legion's commander. That soldiers could be chosen from the legion to serve on the staff of the Prefects is shown by the example of Ulpius Silvinius, who was a *strator* (groom) to the Prefects 'ex legione *II Parthica*' (CIL VI 3408). At Apamea a *lanciarinus* and a *discens lanciarium* (trainee) are attested. Previously the earliest known infantry recorded on inscriptions

Tombstone of Petronius Proculus, found at Apamea and dating from AD 231–233. He died, after 18 years' service, as a *beneficiarius* — a soldier picked out of the ranks and given special duties and privileges — of one of the tribunes of *II Parthica*. The lance in his right hand was a symbol of his status and authority, being distinguished by a thick shaft with some kind of bulging features and hanging cords below the head. (J. Ch. Bahy)



with this function had been members of the Guard<sup>19</sup>.

A *discens* was a soldier training for a specialist post. This is brought out in the career inscription of an unknown *optio* which was found at Alba (CIL VI 3409). Recruited in AD 197 aged 19, he was a *discens equitem* before serving as an *eques*, whence he was made an *optio* after 13 years' service. A number of other trainees are attested at Apamea, revealing more of the professionalism of the early 3rd century army. There is a *discens mensorem* (trainee surveyor); a *discens victimarium* (trainee sacrificer); a *discens aquiliferum* (trainee eagle-bearer); a *discens nucorem* (trainee oil-rubber); and a *discens phalangarium* (trainee member of a phalanx) — the latter soldier served in Severus Alexander's Parthian War, when the emperor formed a phalanx of 30,000 men on the Macedonian model and ordered that they should be called *phalangarii*<sup>20</sup>. The desire to be exact in the description of posts held extended to the legion's *immunes*, those exempt from fatigues because of other duties but who were on basic pay. There is Licinius Valentinius, an *immanis venator* (hunter, AE 1975n160); Septimius Licinius, an *immanis librarius* (clerk, CIL VI 3395); and

Septimius Andra and Anrelins Mucianus, each an *immanis butinator* (trumpeter, IGLS 1371).

### DRESS AND EQUIPMENT

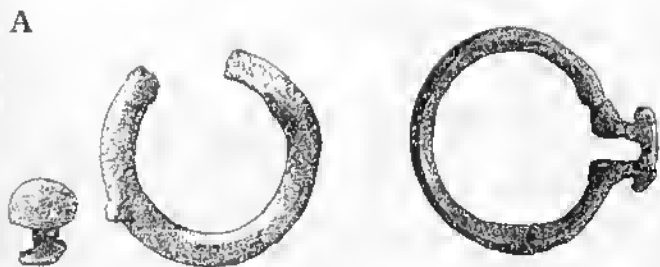
The sculptured tombstones found at Alba and Apamea share common features with those of other legionaries of similar date. These can be said to represent the undress uniform of the time. The latter comprises a long-sleeved tunic gathered at the waist by a belt of varying width. The belt is fastened at the front in a number of ways, but a ring buckle is always incorporated. The cloak worn by the legionaries is the *sagum* ('cavalry' cloak). The sword, which is more often of *spatha* length, is suspended on the left side from a baldric slung over the right shoulder; the scabbard is attached to the belt by a slide, and the chape is either round or pelta-shaped. The shield depicted on the tombstones is no longer the rectangular *scutum*; instead it is either of the oval type used by auxiliaries, or more nearly circular.

Because this is the convention for depicting legionaries on tombstones, body armour and helmet are rarely represented. This dearth has hardly helped the debate about what type of armour and helmets were worn arising

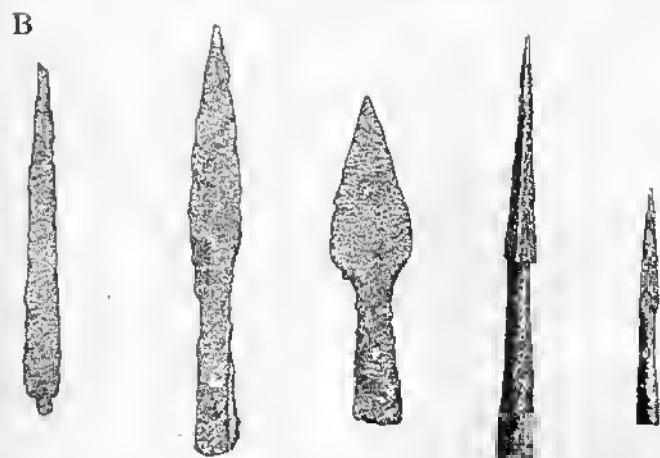
from the notorious 3rd century hiatus in the artefactual record. Few helmets datable to the 3rd century have been found and only one, a copper alloy helmet found at Niedermönten in Lower Germany, continues the evolution of the Imperial Gallic and Imperial Italian infantry types. A comparison of the few helmet representations on tombstones with the 3rd century helmets long thought to have been designed for cavalry use has revealed numerous similarities, particularly the pointed peak, crossed reinforcing bars, and cheek pieces which only leave the eyes, nose and mouth visible<sup>21</sup>. Thus it is possible that legionaries and cavalry wore helmets of similar form in the 3rd century before the introduction of the later types of infantry helmets.

Archaeological finds of body armour are plentiful for the 3rd century, but consist almost invariably of scales or mail. These finds seem to confirm the trend of legionaries giving up plate armour ('*lorica segmentata*') as a body defence. The arch of Septimius Severus in Rome, dedicated in AD 203, is one of the last monuments to depict this type. When emperors started to build state monuments at the end of the century only scale and mail

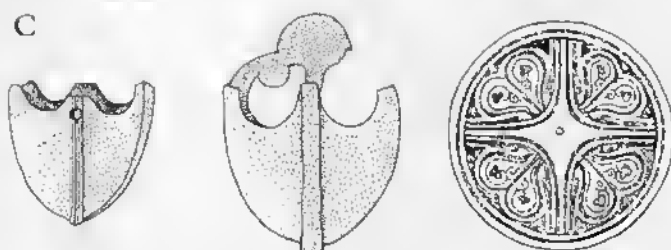




**A**  
Two examples of iron ring belt buckles found at Intercisa, Hungary, the site of major Roman discoveries. That on the left lacks the second fingerform stud; the fastening tongue is missing from that on the right. (Drawings Graham Sumner)



**B**  
A selection of 3rd century spearheads. From left to right: a presumed pilum, a lancea, and a hasta all from Caerleon, Wales; a spiculum (19cm long), and a verutum, both from Staßfurt, Bavaria. (Graham Sumner)

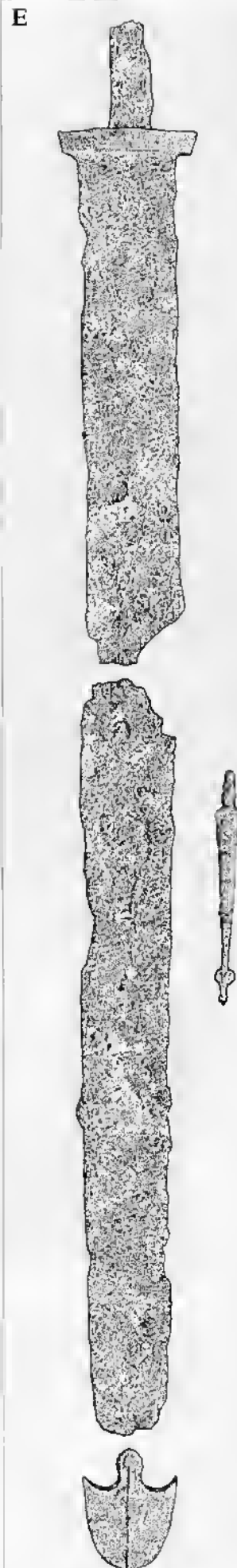


**C**  
Scabbard chapes found at Zuggnau, in what was once 'Upper Germany'; the different types found in the same fort suggest that details of the decoration of equipment were a matter for the individual soldier (Graham Sumner)



**D**  
Drawing from a fragmentary tombstone sculpture found at Alba; it depicts an opus — the 'senior NCO' grade, one to each legionary century — identified by his knob-headed staff. In his left hand he holds the handle of a square case which held writing tablets; note that in each corner of the wooden case coins have been set on as decoration. (Graham Sumner)

**E**  
Part of the goods from a soldier's grave at Lyon, dateable to AD 197. The spatha blade is 68cm long. Note also the pelta-shaped chape, and a slide for attaching the scabbard to the baldric.





The Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum was dedicated in AD 203 to celebrate that emperor's Parthian wars. Time has been unkind to the reliefs, and this part of Panel 1 is one of the few scenes where legionaries wearing the lorica segmentata can still be made out (see upper right), alongside mail-clad soldiers (centre). (After Brilliant)

armour are shown. This does not mean that plate armour was suddenly given up after the death of Septimius; simply that by the end of the 3rd century, some 90 years later, it was not worn. It certainly survived in use up to the middle of the century, since plate armour of Newstead design has been found during the excavation of a temple at Eining in Raetia which was built c.AD 226/229 and abandoned c.AD 260<sup>(12)</sup>.

#### Weapons

The tombstones show that a variety of throwing javelins and thrusting spears were now used by legionaries. The latter were of the *hasta* form which had previously been used by auxiliaries. Generally these are depicted with triangular or diamond-shaped points and thick shafts. The javelins are no longer of the 1st century *pilum* type. Those shown in the sculptures have a lead weight and a shorter metal head than previously. Otherwise the

javelins on tombstones are not of this type. This is made clear by Vegetius in his description of what he calls a *pilum*<sup>(13)</sup>; this, he says, is now called a *spiculum*, and has a 9in. triangular iron head with a shaft 5½ft. long. In addition the legionaries carry a javelin with a 5in. iron head and a 3½ft. shaft, which used to be called a *verutum* but is now called a *verutum*. Both of these weapons had a long pedigree in literature, going back to Cicero and Caesar. However, many of the literary references are poetical, and the terms do not reappear in Latin prose until Ammianus Marcellinus in the 4th century. In his work he often equates *spicula* with artillery arrows, which have sharply pointed pyramidal or triangular heads. This indicates that a *spiculum* and a *verutum* head would look exactly like 'bol' heads found in many Roman forts; only their length might denote usage.

Vegetius often links the infantry usage of the *spiculum* and *verutum* with that of the *lancea*, also a throwing weapon of long pedigree, normally connected with cavalry. Unfortunately he offers no description, so it is fortuitous that *lancarii* are depicted on two tombstones at Apamea. One soldier holds five lances, the other four, which appear to be

about 5ft. in length overall with slim, leaf-shaped heads. There are other missile troops attested in Legio II Parthica. Buried at Apamea was Baebius Severus, an Italian, who had served as a *scorpio* (artilleryman). Archers are attested both there and at Alba (CIL VI 37262). This increased weapon specialisation is no surprise. It is first described by Attian in his 'Ektaxis', where his legions employed a variety of missile weapons against the Alans. In II Parthica the specialists were enrolled in centuries for administrative purposes but would have fought according to weapon type. They could also have been grouped with similarly armed soldiers from other legions when on campaign. The next logical step was the creation of independent specialist weapon units, and this is exactly what happened in the late Roman army. **MI**

#### Notes

- (1) J. Ch. Balty: 'Apamea in Syria in the second and third centuries AD', *Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988) p.91-104 esp. p.98-104.
- (2) The full texts of published inscriptions mentioned in the article can be found in the following publications: AE = *L'Année Epigraphique*; CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*; IGLS = *Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie*; ILS = *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*.
- (3) D.L. Kennedy: 'The garrisoning of Mesopotamia in the late Antonine and early Severan period', *Antichthon* 21 (1987) p.57-66.
- (4) Dio LXXV 12,3-5 with D.L. Kennedy: "'European" soldiers and the Severan siege of Hatra'. In: *The defence of the Roman and Byzantine East*, Ed. P. Freeman and D.L. Kennedy, (BAR Int. Ser. 297; Oxford 1986), p.397-409.
- (5) Vegetius II, 6.
- (6) E. Birley: 'Septimius Severus and the Roman Army', *Epigraphische Studien*, 8 (1969), p.63-82 reprinted in 'The Roman Army: Papers 1929-1986', (Amsterdam 1988), p.21-40.
- (7) M.P. Speidel: 'The centurions' titles', *Epigraphische Studien* 13 (1983), p.43-61.
- (8) Hist. Aug. Caracalla 6,7 with Dio LXXVIII 13,4 and LXXIX 4,3.
- (9) The use of the lance by legionaries has been recorded for the reign of Hadrian by Arrian, *Ektaxis* 17.
- (10) Hist. Aug. Alexander Severus 50,5.
- (11) J.C.N. Coulston: 'Late Roman armour. 3rd-6th centuries AD', *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 1 (1990) p. 139-160 esp. p.146.
- (12) *ibid.* p.147.
- (13) Vegetius II, 5.

Graham Sumner's reconstructions opposite, based on tombstone sculptures, give an idea of the possible appearance of two legionaries of II Parthica during the 3rd century.

(Right) A representation of Aurelius Epitacius, from Thrace, who was buried at Alba, Italy, after 14 years' service. On his tombstone he is conventionally shown wearing 'andress' uniform of tunic, cloak, belt with ring buckle, and sword hung from a baldric over the right shoulder. His shield is flat and oval, and has been given here a design in assumed colours based on a black and white mosaic with shields found in the legionary baths at Alba. In his right hand he holds two spears, reconstructed here as *spicula*. He is shown wearing articulated iron plate armour of 'Newstead' type; and a helmet taken from the 3rd century copper alloy legionary example found at Niedermöller in Germany.

(Left) A representation of another Thracian legionary, Aurelius Musianus, who was a trainee *lancarius* when he died during one of the legion's periods at Apamea, Syria. Again, his tombstone depicts typical andress uniform, but it seems that he was wearing boots and socks rather than sandals. He carries a small round shield, again reconstructed with a design based on the Alba bath house mosaics. In his right hand he grasps five lances in a quiver: this is what the sculpture seems to show, and Josephus certainly says that 1st century auxiliary cavalry carried three or four short throwing spears in a quiver slung on one side of the horse (BJ 3.96).

He wears mail body armour; and on his head a reconstruction of the copper alloy helmet found at Rainau-Buch. This was unfinished, lacking a peak when, in AD 259-260, it was thrown into a well. The broad cheek pieces, covering the ears and overlapping over the chin, were also unfinished. This type of helmet has been considered as a specifically cavalry item; but Rainau-Buch housed infantry, and the helmet is similar in appearance to one depicted on the tombstone of a 3rd century legionary buried at Byzantium. Several authorities now believe that previous classifications of 'covered ear' helmets as exclusively cavalry headgear, based upon the interpretation of 1st century finds, should be questioned in the case of later examples.







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# The 7<sup>e</sup> Régiment de Hussards, 1808

JEAN-LOUIS VIAU

In September 1990 France's first mounted historical re-enactment group was formed, with the aim of recreating the Hussars of the French 1st Empire. The association, *Les Hussards de Lasalle*, seek to recreate the appearance of the legendary 'Devil's Brigade' ('*Brigade Infernale*') led by General Charles Lasalle, and composed of the 5th and 7th Regiments, in 1806-08. They have got further with the manufacture of uniforms for the second of these regiments, although the 5th is also under way, and, courtesy of our respected colleagues at *Tradition* magazine in Paris, we reproduce here photographs of three of their uniforms.



(Left & above right)

Captain, 7th Hussars, here wearing winter campaign dress. The shako is covered with dark green velvet; the broad gold lace top band is correct, but the zig-zag 5mm lower band is an error for this rank — it was displayed only by senior officers. The gilt chain chain is attached to gilt lion-musk bosses each side; or hooked up to a third, set on the top rear, when not in use. A white-on-red pennon identifies 5th Company, 1st Squadron of the regiment. The dark green pelisse, trimmed all round with grey fur, is worn over a gold-laced scarlet waistcoat, hardly visible here. The pelisse decoration in gold lace and tracing braid is set on in a generally similar, though more elaborate pattern to the yellow lace on the trooper's pelisse shown overleaf. Nine three gold lace galloons of rank above the cuffs. The laced scarlet overalls have gold lace sidepanels.

The crimson and gold barrel sash, almost hidden here, is worn over the waistcoat but under the pelisse. The pouch belt and pouch, typically, have red leather campaign covers with gilt luncheon; and the sword belt is also of red leather. The campaign sabretache is black leather, with gilt edging and motifs. The officer's parade quality sabre is laid safely aside in his baggage, and he carries here a simple sword-sheathed issue weapon. The portmanteau, of green cloth, differs from the troops' type only in having gold rather than yellow lace. (All photos, J.-L. Viau)



The group's choice of such an élite formation to depict has encouraged them to aim for the highest standards of research and manufacture in their uniforms and equipment. Long months have been spent poring over the archives and collections at the Musée de l'Armée in Paris, the Musée des Hussards at Tarbes, and the Musée de l'Empire in Provence. The books and articles of such authorities as Lucien Rousselot, Eugène Lelièvre, Rigo and Michel Péard have also been dissected with close attention, and the group has benefited from direct advice from such experts. Although, as indicated in some of the captions to the accompanying photographs, some small errors have been made, these are being rectified.

The reconstruction of 'Hungarian' saddles has also presented a challenge, but the results — although not yet publishable — are already impressive. The hussar re-enactors carry out regular mounted training, using the contemporary *Règlement provisoire à l'usage des troupes d' cavalerie* (An XIII). They have already put on limited public displays, and aim to mount a more impressive turn-out at such major events as the Mourmelon military festival.

While most suitable would-be recruits will have seen the original report in *Tradition* No.56, any reader within reach who knows one end of a horse from another and seeks glory and hard work may contact the 7th Hussars via their captain, Jean-Pierre Mir, 7 impasse des Balnes, 78450 Villepreux, France, tel: 30.56.24.16.

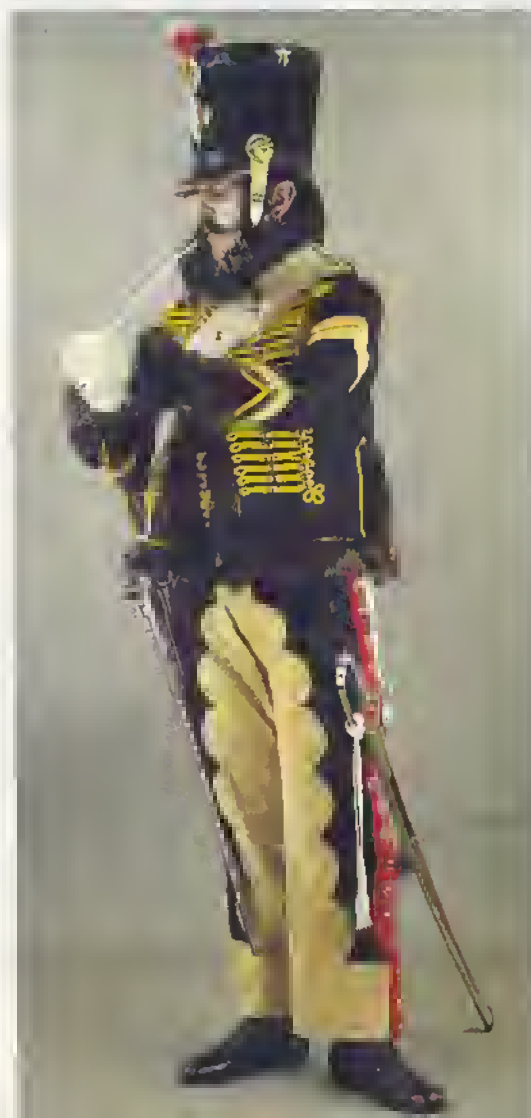




(Above)

The shako worn by this *maréchal-des-logis* is the 1806 model, the body made in black felt without any reinforcing chevrons. The top, the headband with adjusting buckle, and the peak are in black leather; the liner were sometimes bound with brass. The painted leather national cockade is secured by a yellow wool cord loop and a brass hemispherical button. The white-over-red pompon identifies the 5th Company, 1st Squadron. The brass chin scale bosses have a raised star motif. The lozenge-shaped brass plate bears the regimental number stamped in high relief. In full dress, this senior NCO has his shako 'dressed' (garni) with a yellow plaited cord terminating in tassels and, on his right side, *raquettes*, attached to hooks on each side of the top band. Gold lace service chevrons on the upper sleeve indicate at least 15 years' service. The son of Baron Marbot confirmed that the 7th retained the old hairstyle of sidelocks weighed down with pistol balls until the fall of the Empire.

(Below) In winter campaign dress, the NCO wears the *pelisse* and *charvari* trousers. His sabre is the An IV model.



(Main pictures, right & opposite)

Brigadier-fourrier in parade dress, with *pelisse* slung. The dressed shako is fitted with a black plume. The *huyngre* plate was official from 1810, but had been in use to some extent since 1807. The dolman, dark green bordered with flat yellow lace, has five rows of spherical and hemispherical brass buttons and 'squared' yellow lace and frogging. The central row of buttons are larger, and engage the fastening loops of the frogging. The collar, fastened with three hooks and eyes, and the pointed cuffs, are faced scarlet, edged with flat yellow lace. The right button corner of the dolman at the *famé* closure is cut pointed and overlapping. There are functional

internal pockets; hidden here by the sash are false side pockets indicated by yellow lace. The sleeves are cut tight. (The double chevrons of brigadier rank are incorrectly shown white here — they should be yellow.) The fourrier's distinction is a gold diagonal on each upper sleeve.

The *pelisse*, of similar cut but made much looser, is lined with white cloth and edged all round with black fleece. Yellow lace and frogging are the same as on the dolman; but two functional pockets are set in the sides, the openings masked by strips of fleece (observed here). Two doubled yellow cords emerge from inside the base of the collar; that on his right has three alternative loops, that on his left a wooden serving toggle; the *pelisse* is slung by this cord.

The *barri* sash is constructed of crimson wool skeins confined by nine double and two single yellow 'barrels'; it passes three times round the waist over the dolman.



# HUSSARDS, 1808

'Hungarian' breeches in scarlet cloth, with yellow sidestripes and yellow lace figures around the openings of the fly flap at the front, are tucked into 'Hungarian' boots trimmed and tasselled yellow. (The normal blackened steel spurs fixed to the heels are absent here.)

The whitened leather sword belt supports the sabre and sabretache by two and three slings respectively. The latter, of black leather, is faced with dark green cloth with yellow lace edging and embroidered motifs.



## (Above)

In campaign dress, the brigadier-fourrier wears (inaccurately) a simple cloth shako cover; it should typically be in blackened oilskin. The charivari overalls are, however, more accurate than those shown opposite bottom left, with less extensive blackened strapping. Note doubled crossbelt for the carbine and pouch, secured together with a brass stud; and the sabretache protected by a black oilskin cover.

## (Below)

Weapons and accoutrements: sabre à la chasseur, model An XIII; model 1786 carbine; pair of An XIII pistols; belts and sabretache. At top right note the black for the 18-round pouch, and the former for unloading paper cartridges; at bottom left some balls, flints, a picker, and a paper packet of cartridges.

MI



## DONIPHAN'S MISSOURI MOUNTED RIFLEMEN

As a diametrically opposite counterpoise in the Virginia families described in Part 5 are Alexander Doniphan's backwoods men. If they got ammunition money, little of it was devoted to uniforms. They seemed rather to pride themselves on being the sartorial heirs of the Tennessee riflemen who vanquished the British under Andy Jackson at New Orleans, and, no doubt, of Davy Crockett. One observer said of them: 'The unshorn beards and goat and deer skin clothes of many of them reminded us of... the inhabitants of some of the countries of the Russian empire'.<sup>(1)</sup> Another account states that when their street clothes were put 'and there being no opportunity of obtaining more, they brought many of these skins, and dressed themselves with them, in Indian fashion.'

A detail of Doniphan's men confronted a recalcitrant Mexican *alcalde* who demanded their passports in travel through his state, when their officer 'pointed to his thirteen men, dressed in skins, with long beards... every one of this party having, in addition to his gun, holster pistols, sword, and revolving pistols...,' and averred that these were all the passport they required.<sup>(2)</sup> A veteran of Doniphan's regiment stated that their principal weapon was the Mississippi Rifle (US M1841)<sup>(3)</sup> as shown in the accompanying colour plate. Their holster pistols would most likely have been the US M1836 flintlock (shown in the plate) or possibly the M1842 percussion. Their revolvers could have been Colt's patent 1836 original (the 1847 Dragoon model not being available until a bit too late) or, perhaps, pepper-boxes. Their swords were most likely the M1840 dragoon sabre, shown in the plate.

The most detailed description of Doniphan's men, and the one used principally for our plate, was set down by a young man who saw them in New Orleans as they were being transhipped back to Missouri after their eventful odyssey:

'The greatest attraction in the city at present is Col. Doniphan and his Regiment... who are called "Lions" here, but in my opinion they look more like Rocky Mountain Bears... If you can imagine a man about six feet two in four and a half inches high, and well proportioned, with a deer skin (hair on) hunting shirt and pantaloons, the seams fringed with the same material cut into strings, and a bear skin stretched over his face with nothing but cyclopes cut in it, you can

# American Forces in the War with Mexico, 1846-48:(6)

ROSS M. KIMMEL

Concluding our comprehensive study of the evidence for the appearance of the US Regular and Volunteer troops of the Mexican War, the author describes some examples of both conventionally uniformed, and highly unconventional State units.

see a large portion of Doniphan's Regiment. They are swaggering about the verandah and St. Charles with an air of the most perfect nonchalance of any set of fellows you ever saw'.<sup>(4)</sup>

An English traveller who saw the camp of the Missouri Mounted Riflemen during the regiment's incredible 3,000-mile trek from Ft. Leavenworth through the desert of northern Mexico described the camp, and its inhabitants, as follows:

'From appearances no one would have imagined this to be a military campment. The tents were in a line, but there all uniformity ceased. There were no regulations in force with regards to cleanliness. The camp was strewn with the bones and offal of the cattle slaughtered for its supply, and not the slightest attention was paid to keeping it clear from the accumulations of filth. The men, unwashed and unshaven, were ragged and ditty, without uniforms, and dressed as, and how, they pleased. They wandered about, listless and sickly-looking, or were sitting in groups playing at cards, and swearing and cursing, even at the officers... Sentinels... were voted unnecessary.'

Despite their military unseemliness, the English observer said of Doniphan's troops, 'These very men, however, were as full of fight as game cocks, and shortly after defeated four times their number of Mexicans at Sacramento, near Chimalma'.<sup>(5)</sup>

## BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON BATTALION

Owing perhaps to its place of rendezvous — Fort Washington, near the federal capital — in the summer of 1846, this six-company battalion wore the standard US regulation fatigue uniform for infantry from the outset.<sup>(6)</sup>

Because of this, and the fact that most of the men were from the cities of Washington, DC, and Baltimore, Maryland, the unit stood apart in both appearance and degree of sophistication from other, more rustic volunteer units. To this Captain Kenly attributed its frequent friction with its fellow volunteers, 'who, being mostly from rural districts, had some curious-looking uniforms and hats, and would not understand the character or take the fun of these city fellows, particularly as they were dressed in army uniforms'.<sup>(7)</sup>

Brigaded with regular infantry, the Baltimore Battalion (as it was commonly known), saw hot action in the streets of Monterrey. Afterwards, their supply lines stretched beyond the breaking point, the brigade appeared quite shabby — see colour plate. Kenly said: 'Our men begin to need clothing... many... have made sandals from raw hide, which look right well; on parade, there are a good many without jackets, yet they look soldier-like and trim with their cross- and waist-belts.' Five months later, the command having moved to Tampico to aid in Scott's upcoming offensive, he noted that the unit was 'ragged and nearly harried'.<sup>(8)</sup> That summer, the unit's one-year service up, it was sent home and mustered out, whereupon Kenly and other officers recruited a successor unit known as the District of Columbia and Maryland Volunteers. The new unit returned to Mexico, where it spent most of its service garrisoning the town of Jalapa on Scott's line of march in the interior. In December 1847, a 'fine company from Washington... a rifle company, handsomely dressed in dark blue jackets and pants'<sup>(9)</sup> joined the regiment.

(A reconstructed soldier of that company is depicted in Part 5 of

this series.)

## TEXAS RANGERS

Sam Chamberlain first encountered Texas fighting men in a San Antonio saloon known as the Bexar Exchange:

'The [Texas] Rangers were the Scum of our Army and a more reckless, devil-may-care looking set, it would be impossible to find this side of the Infernal Regions. Some wore buckskin shirts, black with grease and blood, some wore red shirts, their trousers thrust into their high boots; all were armed with Revolvers and huge Bowie Knives. Take them altogether, with their uncouth cosumes, lwarded faces, lean and lrawny forms, fierce wild eyes and swaggering manners, they were fit representatives of the outlaws which made up the population of the Lone Star State'.<sup>(10)</sup>

The [Texas Rangers] had existed for some time as a paramilitary force used to protect American interests against, as one contemporary observer put it, 'the Indians and mingrel Mexicans who harassed the settlements of western Texas'.<sup>(11)</sup> When war came, their experience as guerrilla fighters on the Texas-Mexico frontier made them eminently suited to play a role on the American side. Two regiments of mounted rangers were formed, under Commanders Jack Hays and George T. Wood. 'The character of the Texan Ranger is now well known by both friend and foe. As a mounted soldier he has had no counterpart in any age or country. Neither Cavalier nor Cossack, Mameluke nor Mosstrooper are like him; and yet, in some respects, he resembles them all'.<sup>(12)</sup>

The Rangers played a key role in scouting and flanking for Zachary Taylor's force as it wended its way to Monterrey. When the focus of the war shifted to Vera Cruz and Mexico City,

### See also:

'M' No. 40 — Part 1: The course of the war; and contemporary photographs and eyewitness paintings of US troops.

'M' No. 42 — Part 2: Procurement, supply and campaign appearance of Regular troops; illustrations of Infantry uniforms and accoutrements.

'M' No. 44 — Part 3: Mounted branch uniforms illustrated and described.

'M' No. 45 — Part 4: Artillery, Engineer, and Ordnance uniforms illustrated and described.

'M' No. 47 — Part 5: State Volunteer procurement and supply; organisation, character, and details of Virginia, Illinois, Indiana Vols., and Jeff Davis' Mississippi Rifles.



### What a Pennsylvania soldier was issued in Mexico

The following is an exact accounting of the US clothing issued to a randomly selected volunteer during his 18-month service during the War with Mexico. He was a private in Co. G, 1st Pennsylvania Infantry. The account starts with his \$21.00 federal commutation allowance for his volunteer's uniform; then proceeds from the very day his commutation period expired through the items issued him out of US stores:

Leech, Wm.		Dn.
1846		
Dec. 17	To 6 mos. Commutation for clothing	\$21.00
1847		
May 17	" 2 pair Socks	.49
" "	" 1 " Wollen [sic] Pants	2.28
" "	" 1 do Jacket	2.66
[no date]	" 1 pair Wollen Pants	2.28
" "	" 1 " Socks	.25
" "	" 2 Cotton Shirts	.86
" "	" 1 pr Bragans	1.22
" "	" 1 Cap	.95
Nov. 10	" 3 pr Socks	.74
1848		
Jan. 8	" 1 Wollen Jacket	2.66
" "	" 1 pr do Pants	2.28
" "	" 2 Cotton Shirts	.86
" "	" 1 pr Bragans	1.22
April 27	" 2 pr drawers	.71
" "	" 2 " Socks	
May 26	" 1 Cotton Haversack	
" "	" 1 Tin Canern	
June 15	" 1 pr Wollen Pants	1.99
" "	" 1 do Jacket	2.58

Hays's regiment was despatched there and helped stem the vicious guerrilla attacks on Scott's line of march.

The Rangers must never have given a thought to uniforming themselves. An Indiana volunteer officer, Albert G. Bracker, described Hays's men in Puebla, and his description is the basis for the figure on Dun Long's colour plate.

'Bob-tailed coats and long-rail hines, low and high crowned hats, some slouched and others Panama, with a sprinkling of black leather caps, constrained their uniforms; and a thorough coating of dust all over, and covering their huge beards, gave them a savage appearance... Each man carried a rifle, a pair of pistols, and one or two of Colt's revolvers... a hundred of them could discharge a thousand shots in two minutes... I... could distinguish no differences between the officers and men. They carried no sabres.'<sup>101</sup> Major Bracker later met Colonel Hays and said of him: 'Jack was very modest... very plainly dressed, and wore a blue roundabout, black leather cap, and black pants, and had nothing about him to denote that he belonged in the army, or held military rank in it.'<sup>102</sup>

In closing, it is interesting to consider a diary record of the experience of a company of the

2nd Pennsylvania Volunteers returning from the war; for this we are grateful to **Gene Annette Burger**:

### COMING HOME FROM MEXICO

The Westmoreland County Historical Society in Greensburg, Pennsylvania has in its collection a Mexican War roundabout jacket, and the diaries of Privates Richard Coulter and Thomas Barclay given by the descendants of Private Richard Coulter of the Westmoreland Guards, recruited in and around Greensburg, the Westmoreland Guards became Company E of the Second Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers. They were assigned to Gen. Patterson's division of Scott's army, and numbered 94 men all told. They were mustered into service on 1 January 1847, and landed at Vera Cruz on 9 March. The Guards saw action in all of the major battles from Vera Cruz to Mexico City. At the end of the war the 45 men that were left with the unit mustered out on 14 July 1848.<sup>103</sup>

Richard Coulter (born in Greensburg in 1827) states in his diary that on his return from Mexico: '... we got our boxes of clothing etc., which we left at Vera Cruz when we marched into the upper country... among them

were a number of pairs of the old blue uniform pantaloons which the owners to preserve had left and the sailors were soon rigged up in them, making an odd appearance. Barclay, McLaughlin and myself had packed up all our extra clothing in a small box and placed it in one of the boxes. They were about the best preserved of any.'<sup>104</sup> Diary entries further indicate that all these men purchased their shell jackets between 2 January and 5 January 1847: 'an agreement has been entered into, by the Westmoreland Guards, with Digby who furnishes our Company with uniforms — jackets and pants for \$7.<sup>50</sup>' (To date no additional information has been found on Digby.)

The Westmoreland Guards were mustered into the service at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and 'The Bounty' money was paid; each one received \$21.00 in lieu of six months' clothing.<sup>105</sup> A bounty was paid to every man who enlisted in the Mexican War at Pittsburgh. It was more lucrative for the men to take the bounty money and buy their own clothes than to receive the government clothes when they joined. This roundabout jacket may have been acquired in this way by Richard Coulter when he was a member of the Westmoreland Guards.

About the uniforms worn by the soldiers on their way home little is recorded in the diaries. On Tuesday 20 June boxes of clothing that had been left at Vera Cruz were opened and found to be all missing. The uniforms are never mentioned in the diary again.

As the soldiers returned to the States and proceeded up the Mississippi River Richard Coulter recounted in his diary other incidents on the journey. Included are a few. On 6 Thursday July 1848 at Louisville he met his cousin Mr. Eli C. King who helped the whole company get cabin passage at \$6.00 a passenger on the steamboat *Germanman*; this was to be paid at Pittsburgh because all the men were strapped. The baggage was transferred from the *Charles Hammond*. Most of the company were crowded into state rooms; Coulter was one of them. On the morning of 7 July the packet left Louisville bound for Pittsburgh. On 10 July Lt. Meehling was court-martialled for bad conduct. 'Lay up at Steubenville, about 12 o'clock PM. for some hours. All went ashore and had quite a spree. Bills stood guard at the court martial, barefooted and in red Mexican uniform.'

The court martial itself, on 10 July 1848, is reported in some

detail, and is not without interest. Organised by order of Capt. John W. Johnston, Co. E, 2nd Pennsylvania Volunteers, it was presided over by Pic. Charles McGarvey, and the members were two corporals, three privates and a lifer; the judge advocate and orderly were also privates, the former Pic. Coulter. The charges against Lt. David Meehling were 'desertion' — 'that when the steamboat *Germanman* was leaving the wharf at Cincinnati the prisoner was found about to leave'; and 'inhumanlike conduct' — 'that the prisoner did on the evening of 10 July "enter a state-room in an inhumanlike manner, namely, on all fours'.

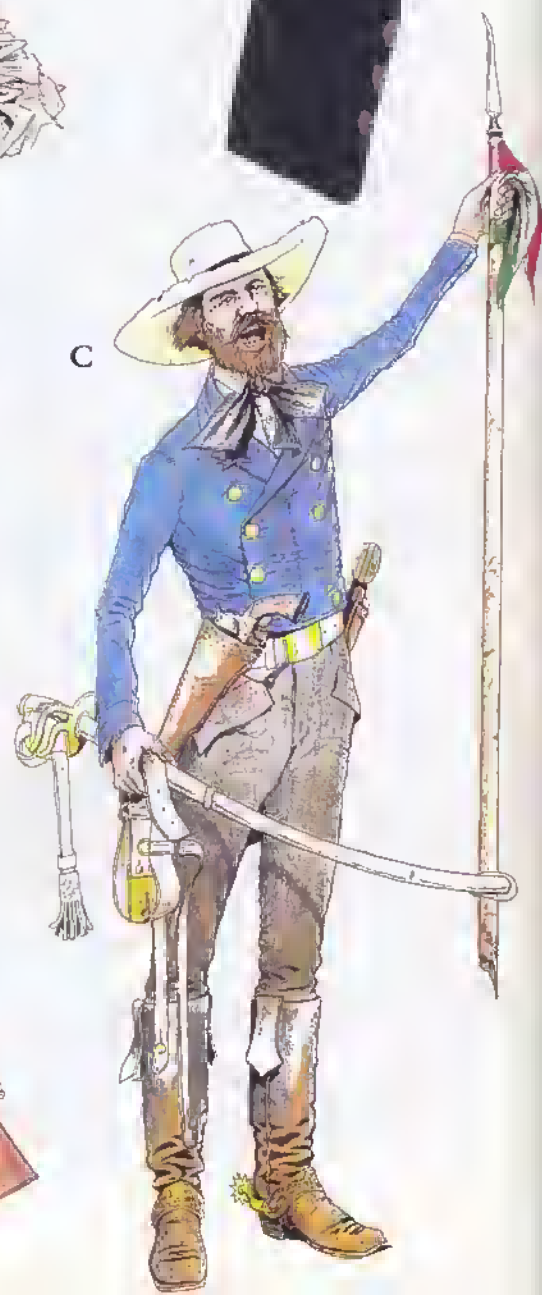
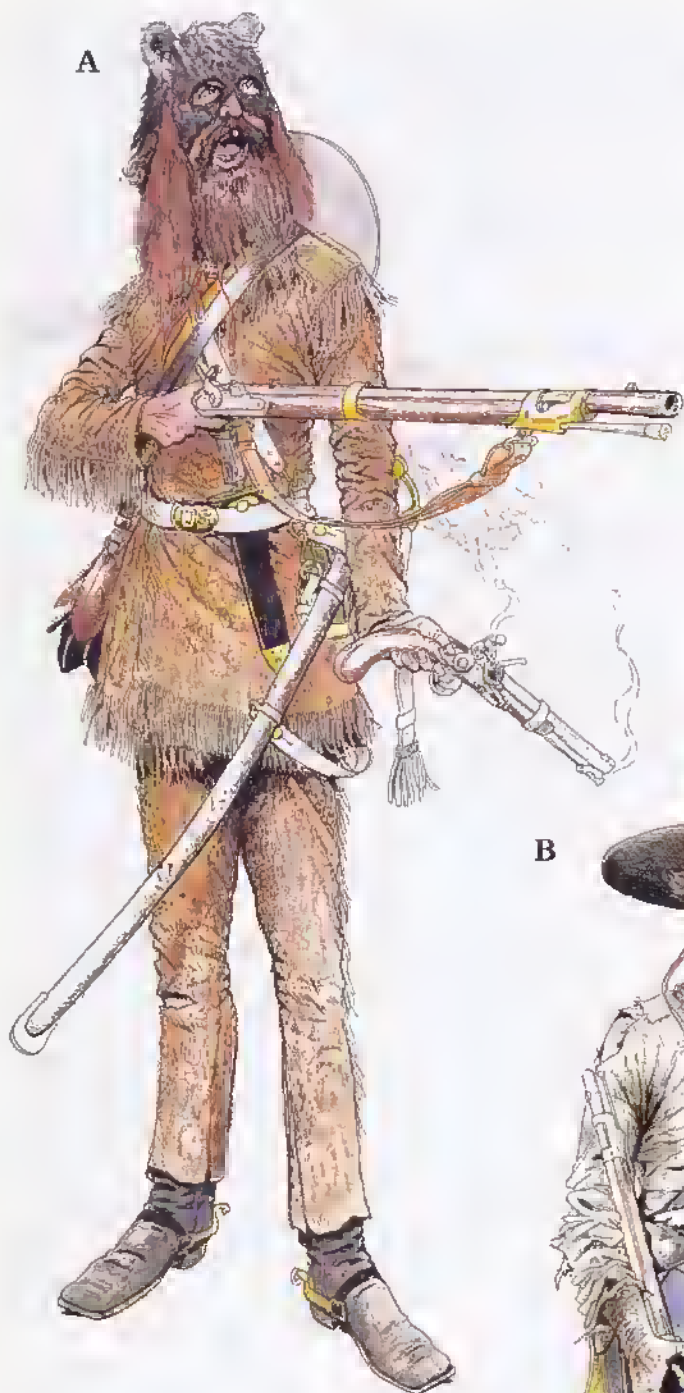
The prisoner objected to the court not being in uniform, but was overruled on the grounds that the court had been convened at an unusually late hour and some of its members had been in bed. The prisoner then pleaded guilty. Testimony was heard that the prisoner knew the hour of the boat's scheduled departure, left in without permission, and had to be picked up later with considerable loss of time in the boat. He protested that the boat usually left somewhat later than advertised, but witnesses denied this.

As to the matter of 'inhumanlike conduct', a witness described the prisoner's method of entry into the stateroom: 'a sort of horrible sunset and pitched into the state room head foremost'. The court professed itself puzzled, and insisted that the witness duplicate the prisoner's movements. His failure after several attempts led to the court commanding the orderly to help him, and this was done, by ripping him, taking him by the collar and breeches, and sending him sprawling — 'much to the edification of the court'.

The prisoner offered no testimony on this charge, casting himself on the mercy of the court. After mature deliberation the court found him guilty on both counts, and sentenced him 'to have his straps cut off at the head of the company or in lieu thereof, to purchase liquor for all present'. Fining and sentence being approved by the company commander, and the prisoner 'having elected to treat', the sentence was executed — thus the 'spree' at Steubenville recorded by Pic. Coulter.<sup>106</sup>

On 11 July the *Germanman* reached Pittsburgh. The next day the company mended their arms, accoutrements and camp equipage; and on Friday 14 July 1848 they were mustered out of service — 'SO, GOOD BYE, UNCLE SAM'.<sup>107</sup>

(Although Richard Coulter was only a private in the Mexican



To end a long series on a light note, artist Don Long contributes three studies of US volunteers based on eyewitness descriptions: see further details in text:

(A) **Daniphan's Missouri Mounted riflemen**, as described by Nelson McClanahan 'with a deer skin (thin on) hunting shirt and pantalons... and a deer skin stretched over his face with... eyeholes.' Weapons include the M1841 'Mississippi' rifle, the US M1836 flintlock pistol, and M1840 shagoon sabre.

(B) **Baltimore-Washington Battalion**, as described by Captain Kenly after the fall of Monterey, with 'sandals from raw hide... a good many without jackboots...'

(C) **Texas Ranger**, as described by the Indiana Volunteer officer Albert G. Bracken at Puebla: 'Buff-tail coat... Panama... one or two of Col's revolvers.' Don Long's figure holds a broken Mexican lance, and a US M1840 sabre and belt retained from a guerrilla.

(D,E) **Surviving jacket worn by Private Richard Coulter of the 2nd Pennsylvania Volunteers**. It is made of a sky blue, two-by-two balanced twill wool cloth, and has nine white metal US 'eagle' buttons on the front. The collar appears originally to have been trimmed in a manner consistent with the standard US infantry fougie jacket. However, the fancy lining and mudding mark this as a non-regulation garment. For more information see Mr. Burger's article 'A Mexican War Roundabout', *Military Collector and Historian* 42:4 (Winter 1990), pp.160-162. Not shown in the view published here is the rear of the jacket, which is cut to a shallow central point at bottom rear. A colour photograph of the US infantry fougie jacket, complete with white collar trimming, is published as B, p.40, 'MI' No. 42.

War, in the Civil War he entered as a captain commanding Co. I of the 11th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. He became colonel of the regiment when it re-enlisted for three years in autumn 1861. Wounded three times, he returned in service each time, with some distinction, and was breveted major-general shortly before Appomattox. Returning to Greensburg, he established himself as a lawyer, banker, politician, and investor in coal mines. He lived until 1908, the last surviving veteran of the Mexican War in Westmoreland County.)

\* \* \*

The results of the War with Mexico reaffirmed Americans' faith in the citizen-soldier. A national ordeal was at hand: American objectives, justified or not, were plain. Citizens rallied to the colours, and by and large performed well. When the war ended with American objective won, the volunteers did indeed,

Cincinnatus-like, return to shop and plough. And America's reliance on the citizen-soldier was vindicated, to flower again thirteen years later, in the Civil War.

MD

#### Acknowledgements:

A number of people and institutions made contributions to this series of articles. Many are named in the text, in notes, and in photo captions; their assistance is gratefully acknowledged. Others who made contributions but are not previously named are equally deserving of appreciation: Michael F. Breiner, William L. Brown III of the US National Park Service, Charles R. Childs, Larry Clemens of the Nimritz Library (US Naval Academy), Mark Greenough of Living History Associates, Todd Harrington, Al Harriman, James S. Hutchins of the Smithsonian Institution, James Labr, William MacIntosh, Michael P. Musick of the US National Archives, Paul Smith, David M. Sullivan, John Sweeney, and Marko Zlatich.

#### Notes:

- (1) Untitled and unattributed article in the *Matamoros (Texas) American Flag*, 7 June 1847, quoted in Smith and Judah, p.143.
- (2) George C. Furbur, *The Twelve Months Volunteer...* (Cincinnati, 1850), pp.253, 453.
- (3) William H. Richardson, quoted in Smith and Judah, p.138.
- (4) Nelson McClanahan, quoted in Smith and Judah, pp.31-33.
- (5) George Ruston, quoted in Smith and Judah, pp.296-297.
- (6) Kenly, p.77.
- (7) Kenly, pp.77-78.
- (8) Kenly, pp.154, 237.
- (9) Kenly, p.375.
- (10) Chamberlain, p.39.
- (11) Brantz Mayer, quoted in Smith and Judah, p.41.
- (12) Major Luther Giddings (1st Ohio Volunteers), quoted in Smith and Judah, p.40.
- (13) Albert G. Bracken, MD, *General Lane's Brigade in Central Mexico* (Cincinnati, 1854), p.174.
- (14) Bracken, p.194. See also H. Charles McBaron, Jr., and John R. Ehling, 'Colonel Hays' Regiment of Texas Mounted Volunteers, 1847-1848', *Military Collector and Historian*, 22:3 (Fall 1970), pp.91, 93; also published in Ehling, *Years of Growth*, pp.133-134.
- (15) Albert, George Dallas, *History of the County of Westmoreland, Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia, 1892), p.383.
- (16) Private Richard Coulter's Diary (2nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, Westmoreland Guards), Westmoreland County Historical Society Library, 1 January 1847 - 14 July 1848, Manuscript Division.
- (17) Sergeant Thomas Barclay's Diary (2nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, Westmoreland Guards), Westmoreland County Historical Society Library, 30 December 1846 - 3 March 1848, Manuscript Division.
- (18) Thomas Barclay's Diary.
- (19) Richard Coulter's Diary.
- (20) Richard Coulter's Diary.

# Early Use of Machine Guns in the British Army

MICHAEL BARTHORP

'The sand of the desert is sodden red,  
Red with the wreck of a square that broke;  
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead  
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.'

In proclaiming that the qualities needed to rally a stricken square were the same as those required to save a Clifton College cricket match, Sir Henry Newbolt was extolling the public school spirit of late Victorian England: 'Play up! Play up, and play the game!' How much he knew of desert warfare and machine guns is another matter. In writing his famous poem he probably had in mind the Sudan campaigns of 1884-85, and in be sure a machine gun had jammed at the Battles of Tairai and Abu Klea, with consequences similar to those faced by Newbolt's public schoolboy officer. Yet the gun in question had been a Gardner, not a Gatling, and its crew had been not soldiers but sailors.

## THE GATLINGS

The Gatling gun, an American invention, had first appeared in 1862. It was a hand-cranked, multi-barrelled weapon whose rate of fire depended mainly on how fast the firer worked the handle — and, indeed, whether it jammed, as it was prone to do. In British service its potential was first appreciated by the Royal Navy, with the result that in some of the earliest land operations in which it (or its rival the Gardner, which operated on similar principles) was used, the gun detachments were funnied from sailors landed from HM ships. The first known use of a Gatling ashore was in the Ashanti War of 1873-4, when a gun was fired on to the waters of the River Prai as a demonstration to impress the emissaries of the Ashanti king: one of the watchers was so horrified by the fire effect that he committed suicide.

The first Gatlings taken into use by the Army were turned by the Royal Artillery: these were of the 1874 model, with six .45in. calibre barrels. It was mounted on a wheeled carriage similar to a field gun's, the ammunition being fed by gravity to the barrels from a drum-shaped hopper fixed above the breech. Two such guns were first used in action by the Army in India during the Jowaki expedition of 1877 in the North-West Frontier.

In the Second Afghan War of

1878-80 these two Gatlings, manned by a detachment of 34 gunners under Capt. Broadfoot RA, were the only machine guns accompanying the invading British columns. They were first used at the Battle of Charasir (6 Oct. 1879), in conjunction with two mountain guns, to assist the advance of a company of the 72nd Highlanders upon a strongly-held hill. After firing ten rounds the drum of one gun jammed and the weapon had to be taken to pieces. Later in the action they opened fire again — 'for the few moments they were able to work' — upon the retreating Afghan infantry. They only fired 150 rounds during the whole battle, which lasted about five hours. Four days later another jam occurred when a Gatling was trying to knock out an Afghan gun. Thereafter, in the ensuing two months' operations around Kabul, as General Roberts, the force commander, wrote subsequently, the Gatlings, 'being found unsatisfactory, were made but little use of'.

Meanwhile four Gatlings of 10/7 Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, under Mrj. Owen had been in action during the last stage of the Zulu War, some Naval Gatlings having been used ashore in the earlier operations. During Lord Chelmsford's final advance two RGA guns were left to supplement the garrison of his first intermediate supply depot. The remaining two accompanied the main column, and at the Battle of Ulundi (4 July 1879) they were placed in the centre of the 80th Regiment, which held the east side of the square. Chelmsford wrote afterwards: 'The two Gatlings jammed several times in the action but when in work proved a very valuable addition to the strength of our defence on that flank'. Evelyn Wood, who was present, said that after the firing ceased he rode out in front and 'counted sixty dead bodies in the long grass within seventy paces of the front of the Gatlings'.

In the campaigns of the 1880s machine gun support was again provided by the Royal Navy, e.g. the six Gatlings landed for the Egyptian War of 1882 and the already-mentioned Gardner guns





*Captain Broadfoot RA (centre) with the Gatling Battery, Kabul Field Force, Afghanistan, 1879. (National Army Museum)*

used in the Nile Expedition and the two Suakin campaigns of 1884-5. A machine gun battery of four Gatlingers, fired from tripods and carried on pack animals, was organised and commanded by Capt. Lloyd RA during the pacification of Burma after 1885, but these guns were also on loan from the Navy.

After the Zulu War Chelmsford had expressed the view that the machine gun was a useful weapon for savage warfare but that it should be regarded as an infantry, not an artillery, weapon. Furthermore, since the Gatling could only be kept in action by 'skilled manipulators' it was

*The same battery ready to move; three mules to each gun, its carriage and wheels. (NAM)*

unsuitable for infantrymen, who required a gun which could be fired as simply 'as one grinds an organ'<sup>10</sup>. As it happened such a weapon was at hand: the first true machine gun, as devised by Hiram B. Maxim.

Although guns like the Gatling were rapid-firers, they were all multi-barrelled and manually operated by a lever or crank. Maxim produced the first single-barrelled, fully automatic gun by harnessing the energy from the exploding charge of each round to power the actions of reloading, cocking, firing and extracting the empty cartridge cases. With the rounds inserted into a belt, all the firer had to do, once he had operated the cranking handle to place a cartridge into the breech, was to press the trigger. The gun would fire and reload automatically, and would continue firing until the trigger was released or the belt was empty. This mechanism could give a rate of fire of up to 600

rounds per minute, so to prevent the barrel overheating it was encased in a water-filled jacket.

#### THE MAXIMS

A .45in. calibre Maxim was first seen in England at the Inventors' Exhibition in South Kensington in 1885. A pattern received official approval in February 1888 and was introduced for the Army in January 1891. A 'galloping carriage' constructed like a limber for the Cavalry and Mounted Infantry, and a wheeled infantry carriage, had been authorised the previous year; the former was drawn by two horses, the latter by a mule, horse, or man-haulage. When mounted on their carriages the cavalry gun stood 4ft. 10ins. above the ground, the infantry model 3ft. 6ins. Alternatively the gun could be fired from a ground-mounted tripod.

The guns were sighted to 2,500 yards and were fed by belts holding 250 rounds, each belt con-

tained in a box; 14 boxes were stowed on the cavalry carriage, 16 on the infantry. The basic guncrew was the No.1 (an NCO) who laid and fired the gun, and his No.2 responsible for ammunition; a further eight riflemen were normally required for manhandling the carriage, and would be disposed to give local protection once the gun was in action or to assist with ammunition resupply. These were the numbers specified in the 1893 Maxim manual, although contemporary photographs show some slight variations.

Maxim detachments formed part of their regiment or battalion, but their deployment was a matter for the brigade or divisional commander. The novelty of this new weapon was reflected in the tactical sections of *Infantry Drill, 1893*, wherein it merited only three mentions: in attack, to provide enfilade fire upon the objective; in defence, to sweep roads and





approaches leading into the position, or to defend an exposed flank; and with the outposts, to whom they would be allotted 'if necessary'. Under the section headed *Savage Warfare* — in which the Army was chiefly engaged up to 1899 — they were not mentioned. However, as Hilaire Beloc

#### Below:

Two horse-drawn Gatlings and men of 107 Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery in Zululand, 1879. Major Owen, commanding, in front of wheel of left-hand gun. Note different carriage from anti-borneo guns. (African Museum, Johannesburg)

said of such campaigning: 'Whatever happens we have got the Maxim gun and they have not'.

#### African campaigns

The earliest use of Maxims by British land forces was in Africa. The Gold Coast Constabulary had one in 1889; and in 1891 a gun under Capt. Williams RA accompanied a small force of what later became the King's African Rifles into Uganda. The latter gun had been presented by Maxim himself to the explorer H.M. Stanley, who had taken it to Central Africa. Apparently it was 'worn-out and faulty' but 'before it broke down it

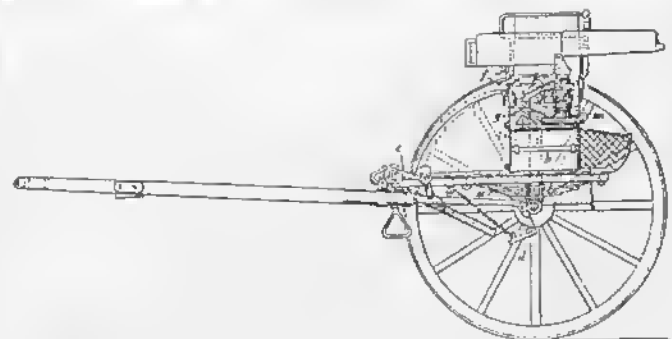


Fig. 10. Gun-carriage of a cavalry machine gun.  
a Carriage spring, b Frame work, c Sights, d Foot board, e Top carriage, f Elevating gear, g Handle for clamping, h Hand-wheel, i Curved base plate, j Socket in Bracket.

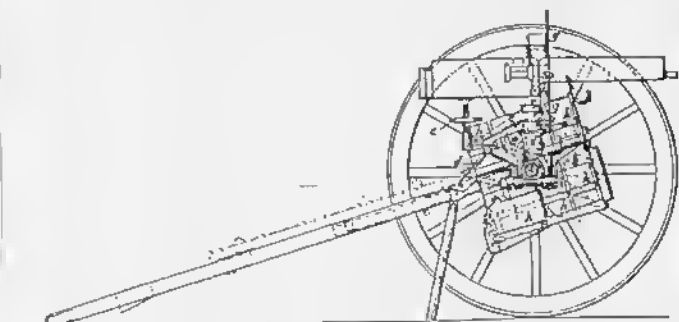


Fig. 11. Infantry machine gun-carriage.  
a Top carriage, b Bracket, c Elevating apparatus, d Hand wheel for clamping, e Hand wheel for traversing, f Socket, g Protective shield, h h Cradle bolts.

gave signal service'.

Further south, in the previous year, Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company equipped its Pioneer Column with Maxims on galloping carriages for the march into Matabeleland, which ultimately was to create Rhodesia. These were used to great effect in the Matabele Revolt of 1893. In this uprising the BSA Company's forces were joined by a Regular colonial unit of mounted riflemen (Europeans) known as the Bechuanaland Border Police, which had been raised in 1885 under officers seconded from the Regular Army. The BSA had an artillery troop of four 7-pdr. mountain guns and four Maxims

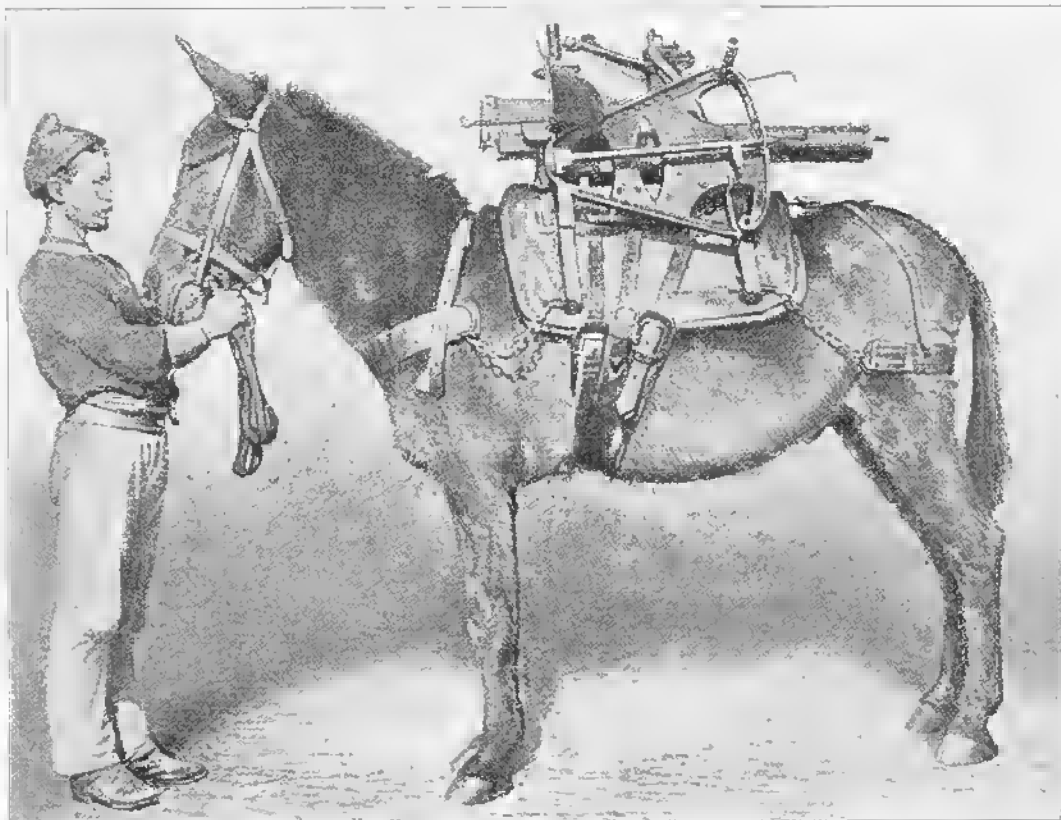
#### Above:

The Maxim gun with (top) cavalry carriage, (bottom) infantry carriage. (Crinson, 'The British Army', 1899)

on galloping carriages, commanded by Capt. Tancred RA. On 2 November 1893, at Impandine, the column to which the BSA Maxims were attached was attacked by Matabele, who were beaten off largely by the Maxim fire.

Shortly afterwards two of these guns took part in the ill-fated Shangani Patrol led by Maj. Forbes to capture the Matabele king Lobengula. This operation was beset by mercurial rains; and





*Maxim and tripod as in previous illustration, mounted on a mule. (NAM)*

became famous in Rhodesian history for the last stand of Maj. Wilson's 32-strong party which, separated from Forbes' main body by the flooding of the Shangani, was overwhelmed by the Matabele. The BBP Maxims had remained with Forbes, but during his retreat the patrol was constantly harassed by rifle fire from the bush and many horses were lost. The Maxims were instrumental in

saving the patrol but drew much fire, Sgt. Gibson being killed at his gun and Sgt. Pyke wounded. The Maxim carriages had to be abandoned and the guns and ammunition placed on the remaining horses<sup>91</sup>.

Maxims were again in action in Rhodesia in 1896 when a further uprising occurred, this time by the Mashona as well as the Matabele. In addition to the guns of the BSA

Company, two Maxims on infantry carriages, each drawn by two mules, were attached to the Regular Mounted Infantry Battalion sent out from Aldershot<sup>92</sup>. Although they sometimes accompanied the mobile columns, the guns being divided between the front and rear of the main body, it was found that, when crossing rough country, the carriages had difficulty keeping

up, resulting in too-frequent halts. They therefore tended to be used purely as defensive weapons for the laagers from which the columns operated<sup>93</sup>.

#### **Maxims in India**

Meanwhile the Maxim gun had reached the Army in India. It is recorded that the first gun sent on active service was that manned by a detachment of 2/King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry serving with a two-brigade force despatched to subdue the Isazai on the North-West Frontier in October 1892. However, the Isazai dispersed without firing a shot, so the gun was not used<sup>94</sup>.

The 1/King's Royal Rifle Corps took part in this expedition and must, soon afterwards, have received its own Maxim, which can be seen, drawn by a mule with its detachment of 11, plus an ammunition mule with Indian muleteer, in a photograph of the battalion parading before joining Sir Robert Low's division for the Relief of Chitral in 1895<sup>95</sup>. Other battalions in this division with one Maxim each were 2/King's Own Scottish Borderers and 1/Gordon Highlanders. Attached as divisional troops was a detachment of 1/Devons with two Maxims, tripod-mounted and

*Maxim detachment, 1/King's Royal Rifle Corps, Chitral, 1895. On this gun the fitter or No.1 is an officer. (NAM)*





carried on mules.

When the division attacked the tribes holding the Malakand Pass on 3 April, the Devons' guns supplemented the fire of the mountain batteries against the enemy sangars to cover the infantry's ascent of the heights. The other guns supported their own battalions. The sangars occupied by the tribesmen in the Malakand were described by an artillery officer as 'enormous, natural boulders which a 40-pounder could not have moved<sup>(1)</sup> so the fire effect was limited, although it kept the enemy's heads down and deterred those higher up from launching counter-attacks as the lower sangars were approached by the infantry.

Against scattered tribesmen in the open in this sort of hill warfare, C.E. Callwell, in his *Small Wars*, wrote that Maxims 'scarcely get a proper chance, as they are not very well suited for picking off individuals, and it is dangerous to thrust them too far to the front with the small parties which are so much used in operations of this class<sup>(2)</sup>. Wherever the fire effect of the Maxims, it would seem they had a morale value. The nickel-plated .303in. bullets of the new Lee-Metford rifle, first used by British infantry in this campaign, were less feared by the tribesmen than the heavy lead .45in. bullets of the old Martini-Henry; but they were alarmed by the stream of bullets and the noise of the Maxim, which they called 'the rattle gun'<sup>(3)</sup>.

The Maxim gunners with Low's force enjoyed better practice ten days later, firing across the Panjkora River at the enemy advancing in mass over open fields in pursuit of the Guides Infantry, who were steadily withdrawing to their bridgehead on the far side of the swollen river. The Guides reached their camp but could not rejoin the main body as the bridge had been destroyed by tribesmen. To assist them against the anticipated night attack, some Sikh infantry and one of the Devons' Maxims under Capt. Peebles, a dedicated machine-gunner, were rafted across. When the tribesmen attacked they were suddenly illuminated by a mountain battery firing star shell, and the Maxim and riflemen had little difficulty in beating them off. Unfortunately Peebles was mortally wounded in the stomach. His death was not merely a loss to the Devons; he was, apparently, 'the only officer who knew the working of a Maxim gun'<sup>(4)</sup>.

#### MIXED VERDICTS

There is little doubt that the



Maxim was still a novel and perhaps suspect weapon whose value was little understood. It was used in the great Pathan Revolt of 1897, two guns in particular being the mainstay of the defence of Chakdara Fort, held by a party of the 45th Sikhs and Probyn's Horse for six days against incessant massed attacks. It was, incidentally, in the Tirah expedition of this campaign that the first cavalry Maxim appeared on active service, the 16th Lancers providing the divisional troops machine gun detachment. Yet in his fairly detailed account of the Tirah Field Force Col. Hutchinson, who was present, though mentioning the presence of Maxims with the force, says little of their tactical use or effect. In the collection of 109 photographs taken in the Tirah by the war correspondent, René Bull, only one features a Maxim — that of 2/KOSB. Such a dearth of evidence about a new and potentially highly lethal addition to the soldier's armory suggests that they were little used, greater faith being placed in the tried and tested mountain artillery.

Writing of the propensity to jam at critical moments of the earlier guns like the Garling, Callwell wrote: 'A weapon which fails just when it is most wanted is a distinct danger. It may do good work when all goes smoothly, winning thereby a confidence to which it is not entitled and causing it to be depended on to secure a vital point of which it is incapable; but if it proves a broken reed in some moment of crisis later on, its presence with the force may have done incalculable harm'.

The Maxim was mechanically more reliable than the Garling but, like any machine, was subject to stoppages of one sort or another. While commending fully automatic guns' absolute trustworthiness 'to commit destructive havoc', Callwell was constrained to add, 'providing that their mechanism does not go out of order<sup>(5)</sup>, perhaps he should have added, 'and if it does, that there is a Peebles to repair it'....

#### The Sudan

Callwell's reservations about the Maxims' suitability for hill warfare have been mentioned, but he qualified this by saying 'an open field of fire, and a well-defined object to aim at are almost more necessary to machine-guns than to artillery<sup>(6)</sup>. This requirement was amply fulfilled by the Sudanese desert and the horde tactics of the Khalifa's Dervishes from 1896-98. The initial operations for the reconquest of the Sudan in 1896 were undertaken by a division of the British-trained Egyptian Army, but the Egyptian field batteries were supplemented by a Maxim battery of four guns manned by 1/North Staffords and 2/Connaught Rangers. At the Battle of Firket these guns covered the advance of the Egyptian infantry by firing over their heads from a spur upon the village wherein the Dervishes had been surprised. They also broke up the only counter-attack attempted by the enemy. During the cavalry reconnaissance of the Dervish position on the Ashara in 1898, a sudden attempt by Baggara horse to encircle the Egyptian squadrons was completely foiled by the

squadrons' two Maxims.

The greatest number of Maxims yet deployed in a single action appeared in Kitchener's Anglo-Egyptian army at Omdurman, where the terrain and the enemy's massed ranks perfectly conformed with Callwell's ideal. Furthermore, since Kitchener adopted a static position to confront the Dervishes, there was no problem about their manoeuvrability. Interspersed between the battalions behind the zareba were no less than 20 Maxims: six manned by the Royal Artillery, four by 1/Royal Irish Fusiliers, and ten by Egyptian artillerymen; aboard the Royal Navy's six gunboats on the river were a further 24. When the great Dervish mass came within 2,000 yards of the zareba, Winston Churchill heard how 'the tremendous banging of the artillery was swollen by the roar of musketry and the sickening sinner of the Maxims'. So intense was the fire that the Maxims 'exhausted all the water in their jackets, and several had to be refreshed from the water-bottles of the Cameron Highlanders before they could get on with their deadly work'<sup>(7)</sup>.

#### South Africa

A year later the South African veldt also offered long, open fields of fire for the cavalry and infantry Maxims; but the Boer commandos seldom, if ever, presented unmissable targets like the Khalifa's warriors. Indeed, for infantry advancing across the open veldt against the Boers ensconced on their kopjes, it was often the supporting Maxims mounted on their wheeled carriages which,

being difficult to conceal, attracted the enemy fire which killed the crews.

Few cavalry colonels had much appreciation of their Maxims. At Talana Hill an enterprising squadron commander of the 18th Hussars had, on his own initiative, concealed his dismounted men and the regimental Maxim under cover ready to open fire on the horses a Boer commando had left in its rear, when his colonel rode up, reprimanded him and ordered the Maxim away. Shortly afterwards this Maxim got stuck in a stream-bed and all the crew were killed or wounded trying to extricate it.

This difficulty of keeping wheeled guns up with mounted troops had been experienced in Rhodesia, as mentioned earlier, and it was more convenient to carry tripod-mounted guns on pack horses, as Col. Thorneycroft arranged for his regiment of mounted infantry. MI units usually had a two-gun Maxim section of an officer, two NCOs and 14 privates, in contrast to cavalry regiments which only had one gun. That cavalry machine guns could perform usefully was proved at Magersfontein when the Maxims of the 9th and 12th Lancers, in conjunction with G Battery RHA, protected the right flank of the pinned-down Highland Brigade — 'some of the best work done on a day of failure'<sup>(18)</sup>.

The use of machine guns in South Africa did not win the weapon many champions in the Army, and it was said that 'very rarely in the history of the Boer War do we find any clear instances of machine-guns being used with marked or decisive effect'<sup>(19)</sup>. In the 1906 edition of Callwell's book, which had the backing of the General Staff, only two of its 498 pages were devoted to its employment — and the first was headed, 'Uncertainty as how best to employ them!'

One enthusiast was Lt. Col.



McMahon, Chief Instructor at the School of Musketry, who, impressed by the machine guns' effectiveness in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, constantly preached the importance of their firepower for any future, particularly European, war. His teachings were incorporated in *Field Service Regulations*; but the only practical improvement was the increase in the number of guns per regiment/battalion from one to two, and the replacement of the old Maxim by the lighter and more reliable Vickers-Maxim. In default of more guns, McMahon concentrated on improving the musketry of both cavalry and infantry by introducing a new range course which culminated with the rapid practice of 15 aimed shots per minute at 300 yards.

So successful was McMahon's training that in the early battles of 1914 many Germans thought they were opposed by multiple machine guns. They, of course, had fully absorbed the potential of automatic weapons and had armed accordingly — as the British Army learned to its great cost when the fighting bogged down into the siege warfare of the trenches, and the huge losses inflicted by German machine guns upon rifle and bayonet-armed attackers forced a complete

and hurried re-appraisal of the pre-war scepticism about this weapon<sup>(20)</sup>. **MI**

- (1) Hensman, H., *The Afghan War of 1878-80* (1881), 33.
- (2) Roberts, F-M Lord, *Forty-One Years in India* (1900), 406.
- (3) Quoted Longstaff, Maj. F. and Atteridge, A. Hilliard, *The Book of the Machine-Gun* (1917), 34.
- (4) Wood, F-M Sir Evelyn, *From Adibshipman to Field-Marshal*, Vol. II (1906), 81.
- (5) Tylden, Maj. G., *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research (JSAHR)*, Vol. XXXVIII, 174.
- (6) For further details of the BBP and the Shangani Patrol see *Ibid.*, JSAHR XIX, 236; and the novel *The White Men Sang*, A. Fullerton (1958).
- (7) See *MI/14*, 24; *MI/15*, 22, 27.
- (8) See Alderson, F.A.I.I., *With the Mounted Infantry and the Mashonaland Field Force* (1896, reprinted Rhodesia 1971).
- (9) Iare, Maj. Gen. Sir S., *Annals of the King's Royal Rifle Corps*, Vol. IV (1929), 124.
- (10) National Army Museum Negative No. 19977.
- (11) Quoted Hutchinson, Col. H.D., *The Campaign in Utah* (1898), 238.
- (12) Third Edition (1906), 441.
- (13) Harris, John, *Abadi Sounding of Bugles: The Siege of Chitral* (1975), 166.
- (14) Younghusband, Col. G.J., *The Story of the Gaudes* (1908), 170.
- (15) Callwell, op. cit., 440-1.
- (16) *Ibid.*

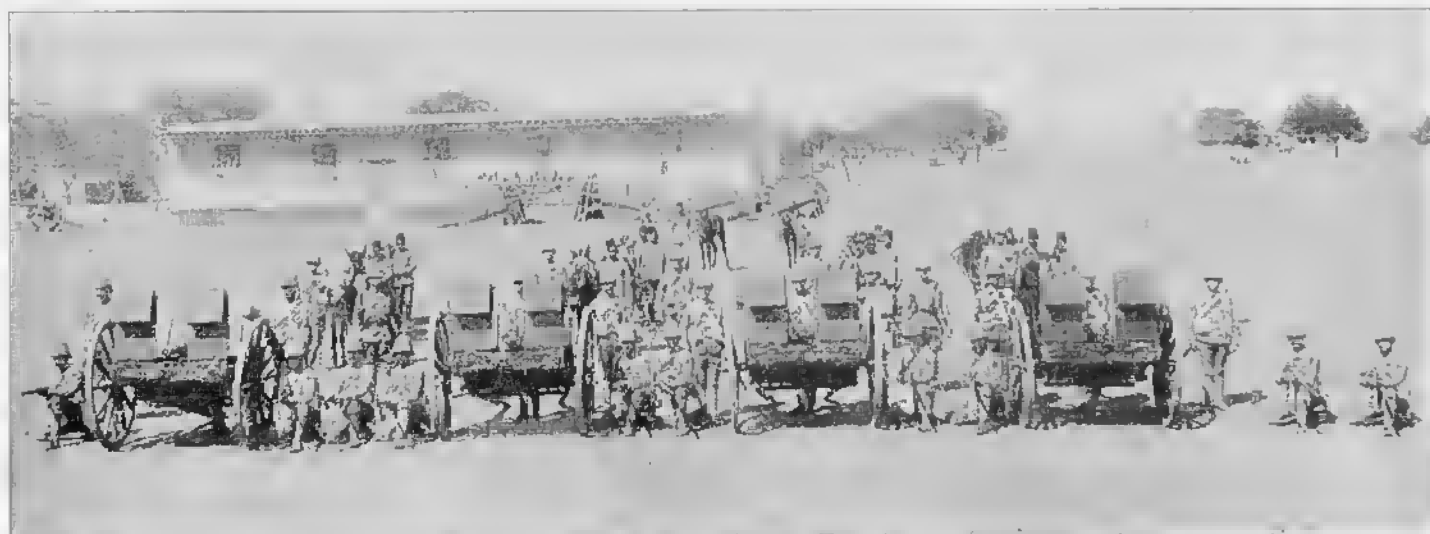
Maxim on wheeled carriage of 11-Angyl & Sutherland Highlanders, before leaving for South Africa in 1899, with shield folded down. (*Navy & Army Illustrated*, 1899)

- (17) Churchill, Winston S., *The River War* (1899), 274.
- (18) Quoted Anglesey, Marquess of, *History of the British Cavalry*, Vol. 4 (1986), 84.
- (19) Longstaff and Atteridge, op. cit.
- (20) See *MI/14*; Pegler, Martin, 'The Vickers Machine-Gun 1914-18'.

#### Other sources:

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 Fetherstone, Donald, *Weapons and Equipment of the Victorian Soldier* (1978)  
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*Handbook for the Maxim Chamber Machine-Gun* (1893)  
*Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine* (1885)  
 Myatt, Maj. F., *The British Infantry, 1660-1945* (1983)  
*Navy and Army Illustrated* (1896-1902)

11-Royal Irish Fusiliers' Maxims with wheeled carriages, Sudan, 1898. This model had a folding shield with belt boxes attached, here in the upright position, instead of the fixed shield in the earlier diagram. The gun muleteers are Egyptian. (*Illustrated London News*, 1898)



# Military Miniatures Reviewed

**Tradition, 54mm; Royal Scots Grey officer and 92nd Highlander, Waterloo**

The long-established firm of Tradition has produced a superb vignette of one of many stirring incidents recorded on 18 June 1815. At a crucial moment in the battle, as the Allied line began to give way, the 92nd Highlanders were ordered to charge the French. As they responded, the Scots Greys came up behind them and immediately joined in the charge. Together the two regiments rushed headlong at the French, with many of the 92nd clinging to the Greys' stirrup leathers; and it is this brief and courageous advance, charged with excitement, that the model depicts.

The kit comes in 15 pieces and includes a clear colour photograph of the painted model and painting instructions. The galloping horse is in two halves, and is nicely modelled and animated. As all four hooves are off the ground, two of the legs are supported on tufts of coarse grass which contain pegs that locate in holes in the textured base. These legs needed a certain amount of delicate manipulation and bending to ensure that the upgirdle fitted into the base and, at the painting stage, the grass tufts require subtle colouring and drying to avoid looking crude and heavy. (Some modellers will in doubt wish to mask them with 'real' grass from the foliage box.) Saddle blanket, harness and ruffled cloak are incorporated in the main casting, only the reins, reins and bits being separate additions. Both horse halves needed a fair amount of preparatory work to remove mould lines and flash, but joined together quite accurately, only requiring a small amount of filling for an acceptable result.

The two figures each consist of a main body casting which includes head, torso and legs. The separate pieces to be fixed to the Highlander comprise his pack, musket and arm. The musket fitted perfectly into the left hand, while the right hand has a stirrup and stirrup leather cast onto it which must be glued in the left side of the saddle flap once all the elements have been assembled and painted.

As with the infantryman, the cavalry officer's arms are both separate castings, the left hand positioned to receive the reins and the right fully extended, grasping the sword. The only other additional item to be attached to the rider is a one-piece casting of the sabretache and scabbard. Whenever necessary with these add-on castings, pegs and corresponding holes have been introduced into the design: and in every instance (with the exception of the horse's legs referred to above) all these parts fitted pretty accurately with only minimal filling required,



although cleaning up of mould lines and a small amount of flash was once again necessary.

Both figures seem well proportioned and animated, although it has to be said that a really convincing running figure is extremely difficult to achieve and, for our part, the Highlander does not really capture the feeling of half-mad savagery that was so evident in the action.

The main reservations I have with these figures lie in the sculpting of the faces and uniform details, folds and creases. Many of the figures now appearing on the market incorporate a tremendous amount of extremely crisp and minute detail, while faces are full of character and expression. In the

models under review much of this detail is rather sketchily indicated, requiring very careful painting for a convincing result. However, with patience and a steady hand, these castings should provide a convincing reminder of a proud moment in the history of the British Army.

## TV Models, 54mm & 120mm

(contd):

**FO1-54: Modern British Infantryman**

**FO2-54: British Tank Commander, Gulf War**

**FO3-54: British Infantryman, Gulf War**

**FO4-120: British Infantryman, Gulf War**

**TV Models' Gulf tank commander, FO2-54.**

**FO3-54, 'TV Models' Gulf infantryman in NBC suit with LSM.**



**Tradition's 54mm Royal Scots Grey/92nd vignette.**

If you've ever encountered a tall beribboned gentleman of Hibernian extraction wearing 'earns' at a model show, you've met the rather high-profile proprietor of TV Models. From small beginnings the company has made a name for itself with diorama accessories in a variety of scales. Their catalogue — which is well worth getting — includes a good many items designed to complement the burgeoning range of 120mm figures available, as well as such gems as photo-etched boat cables (in two styles, yet!) suited to exactly fit Airfix Multipose.

Inevitably, TV Models have graduated to figures of their own, and their first releases show great promise as well as a refreshing change of subject from the metal man.

FO1 provides a typical British infantryman of today with the '90 pattern PLCE rig, SA80 rifle and Mk VI GS helmet. As such he could be painted in desert or temperate DPM to taste. The photo provided with the model depicts the model finished in the more familiar European 'green'. The pose is quite good, if a little static. The main problem is trimming the large blocks of excess resin from the torso and leg mouldings in such a way as to provide a decent mating. The body in particular has not been designed with this in mind, and some careful surgery will be necessary. (One sometimes wonders if the people who run matters in production factories ever have to actually build their creations.) Detail is quite good and in scale, a creditable touch being the copper wire moulded integrally with the rifle to provide for the barrel (an impressively delicate moulding in resin). An exception to the die-

**FO4-120, the large scale 'TV Models' Gulf infantryman.**





inctive helmet bands, which are more like ropes than tapes. A feature of this and the other 54mm figures in the range is the very neat base provided, which comes complete with cast-on scenic detail. In this correspondent's opinion this little extra detail is a definite plus factor over similar products.

FO2 is a quite delightful figure depicting a typically British tank officer pulling on his gloves (now who do we know who favours the kid leather air-crew issue type?). The downside to this figure is the failed attempt at depicting the tanker's CVC helmet. The sculptor hasn't managed to capture the shape, and the result is far from convincing. Luckily there is a remedy. When I first saw this range at Euro Militaire I also purchased some of their 'spare' heads and infantry equipment. Amongst the heads is one wearing the 'bush hat' which perfectly complements this figure. Personal equipment is confined to a '90 pattern shoulder holster, and a respirator case at the right hip. A nicely detailed *shemagh* is cast

with the body, while a separate pair of binoculars enables a little extra detail to be added.

FO3 is the fully equipped desert soldier. This chap wears the Mk.IV NBC suit and Combat Body Armour (CBA), over which he has a chest-ponch rig (I assume this to be the Arktis private-purchase type, although if it is, the sculptor has slightly mis-interpreted the layout). His ensemble is completed by a belt rig with respirator and what I think are two '58 pattern pouches. The weapon is the ubiquitous SA80 in its LSW form. From the technical point of view this figure shows considerable progress down the learning curve, with the excess material planned for much cleaner and easier removal. Again the neat 'turned' base completes a model needing only the addition of a sling for the LSW to produce a piece as good as anything on the market.

Sadly, the same cannot be said of the 120mm figure. FO4-120 depicts an infantryman similarly attired, albeit without the NBC suit. Again the chest

rig is attempted, but again the sculptor has failed to quite capture it, with the result that it looks more like Israeli than British kit.

The primary problem with this model, however, is a more basic one. *Large size magnifies problems.* Anatomically this appears to be what I call a 'one-aspect' figure: that is to say, it has been designed like a two-dimensional picture. Viewed from head-on the pose is quite good; turn it sideways, and it all goes to pot. The main problem is the left arm, which is not only far too thin but shown in a position which is physically impossible. (You cannot fold your forearm to lie parallel with the upper arm unless you dislocate your elbow). The other obvious problem is the boots, which are too big and taper into what appear to be tubular ankles. In both cases, bearing in mind the relatively short life of resin moulds, the originators should perhaps consider new masters for the parts in question, as they spoil what is otherwise quite a good model.

Detail and definition do not achieve the standards set by the likes of Julian I Hollis (who masters a number of the Verlinden figures) but is certainly not irredeemable. Once again I found the body-to-legs mating less than precise after removing the excess, but to be fair this is a problem that also besets the Verlinden figures. One irritation TV Models have overcome, however, is getting the separate feet lined up correctly with the legs. The small circular base provided simply depicts sand: two footprints thereupon provide the answer — simple but very effective.

In summation, the 54mm figures are very good indeed, and if the 120mm range shows the same improvement in technical quality as it progresses there will be little to complain about.

The ideal references for British Gulf uniforms and equipment can of course be found in back issues of this journal, the appropriate issues being *MP* Nos. 34, 35, and particularly 41 and 42. **MI**

## 'Under Two Flags'

It is a little unusual to walk into a shop and be able to buy a scale model of that very establishment, but that is possible at 'Under Two Flags', the model soldier outlet in London's West End. Owned by expatriate Glaswegian Jock Coutts, 'Under Two Flags' straddles both sides of a line dividing military figure collectors, as it caters equally to the traditional toy soldier enthusiast and the dedicated custom figure builder.

Jock Coutts — 'no relation to the firm of bankers, unfortunately' — has owned 'Under Two Flags' for around 20 years. In that time he has seen many changes in taste, but reckons that the market for both types of model figure still runs at a comfortable 50-50. The shop itself is in a pedestrianised mews located literally round the corner from the back entrance to Selfridges, the internationally-renowned department store in Oxford Street. This position (if one tries to forget the horrendous hike in London commercial rents and rates) has done wonders for Jock's business over the years. 'Visitors to London, particularly those from overseas, can spend time here while the womenfolk browse in Selfridges. It means everyone is kept happy'.

While Jock does not preside over the largest model shop in the UK, the visitor is drawn to the pleasant, welcoming atmosphere of a mini-museum where well-lit display cases are filled with a wide variety of figures in all scales. Jock stocks all the top quality lines from the world's manufacturers; but where 'Under Two Flags' particularly delights the eye is the many finished figures displayed in realistic poses, surrounded by the paraphernalia of warfare. Customers are invariably



Jock Coutts' toy shopfront of his own establishment.

drawn to these dioramas, many of them the work of Jock himself, and such displays do his business no harm at all. He finds that the figures featured are often requested, the customer's imagination being fired with that extra little bit of enthusiasm by seeing what can be achieved with imagination and skill.

Jock shares with his customers a passion for the Napoleonic period, and the armies of the British Empire from 1870-1914. And if such figures can be posed in the proverbial 'last stand', so much the better: Jock likes nothing more than to plan a diorama in which the sole survivor of a battle or skirmish stands bloody but unbowed, head and shoulders above the bodies of his antagonists.... He also prefers to work in the 'traditional' 54mm size, although admits that the advancing years can be a barrier to the intricate detail generally demanded by today's superbly detailed model figures — a problem many of us have to face.

Although he does not feel a military background is compulsory for running a successful business in this hobby field, Jock served in the Royal Scots Fusiliers just after World War II. Military service did, he admits, instill a certain basic 'feel' for the subject which does come in useful. A textile merchant by trade, Jock left when the

business was bought out, and took on the shop simply to 'have a try'. He now runs it with the help of his wife and son, and has never looked back.

Very positive about the health of the UK model figure industry, Jock Coutts reckons that hobbies in general are a primary British attribute, although he gives due credit to the superb products currently coming in from abroad. But it is easy to see that his first love is the traditional British toy soldier, which he makes in the basement of the shop: 'For me they fire the imagination, bringing back childhood memories for one thing, although I had very few of them then.'

'In my opinion it was the BMSS that set the standard for the hobby long ago, and it's good to feel you're doing your bit to carry that on. I view my own range more as *objets d'art* than simply "models" — one reason why I rate displays in the shop as essential — I'd be up the creek without them. Certainly one can make a living selling simply by mail order: but for me, it wouldn't be the same.'

Regarding the top selling subjects, it comes as no surprise to hear Jock list the 'big three' without a moment's hesitation — Napoleonic, British

Empire (particularly the Zulu War), and Ancients. And 54mm is still the most popular scale.

That said, 'Under Two Flags' stocks model figures in all scales, including plastic kits 'so that the youngsters don't go away empty-handed', as well as accessories, periodicals and books. In addition, the visitor's eye is drawn to a number of unusual and attractive items, particularly a range of 1:32 scale aeroplanes in tinplate, and a recent release, a World War I British tank. Also popular is a series of 'frontages' designed by Derek Baxter. Primarily intended as backdrops for toy soldier displays, these include an RAF guardroom, railway stations and stores. Street figures are another speciality of 'Under Two Flags', each one of which is painted by Jock's wife.

Anyone with an interest in military figures or toy soldiers will be well rewarded by a visit to Jock Coutts' tiny trading post at 4 St. Christopher's Place, W1. Chances are that if you have questions about the history of miniature figures, Jock will be able to answer them — and who knows, as a memento of the visit he might just sell you the shop.

Jerry Scutts

### Feature figures

Readers wishing to model figures based on subjects featured in articles in this issue may find the following suggestions helpful, though far from comprehensive; conversion will often be necessary.

#### French Napoleonic Hussars:

Benito — Officers in kolpack and shako (both 54mm); Poste Militaire — Three castings, 1804 and 1808-12 (all 90mm).

Canadian Paratroopers: Cheshire Volunteer — Two castings (both 654mm).

Michael Wittmann: Chota Sabih — SS-Obersturmführer, SS Panzers, 1943 (54mm); and Hauptsturmführer, SS Panzers, Normandy (both 54mm).

# US Army Commissary Sergeants' Uniforms, 1873-1903

JOHN P. LANGELLIER

One of the improvements introduced into the post-Civil War US Army recognized, at long last, the importance to both the efficiency and the morale of the troops of a proper supervision of the whole question of rations. Congress authorized the establishment of a new rank for non-commissioned staff personnel assigned to military posts and installations to handle the many details related to the men's sustenance.

Designated commissary sergeants, these men received a distinctive uniform for dress occasions as set forth by General Orders No. 38, 20 March 1873, Adjutant General's Office. A dark blue single-breasted basque coat, which closed with nine evenly spaced eagle buttons of the pattern adopted in 1854 for all enlisted personnel, constituted the main item of issue. 'Cadet gray' trim was

*In 1880 new specifications introduced white piping and white crescents in lieu of the all-cadet-gray scheme adopted in 1872. (Smithsonian Institution)*

placed down the front edge and the rear split of the skirt; cadet gray piped edged the top and bottom of the collar, and four-inch cloth patches of the same shade ran back from the front of the collar. In addition, shoulder straps, cuff flashing, and tail designs (which extended to a few inches above the skirt) of the same colour facing material distinguished the basic coat. Blue wool belt loops piped in cadet gray appeared above the waist, let into the seam at approximately the position of the hips. Six large buttons of the 1854 pattern adorned the tail, three on each side of the split. Three identical brass buttons of a smaller size were placed on each cuff,

attaching at the outer edge of the scalloped facing set on the outside of the sleeve, and one button of the same design and size fastened each shoulder strap at the end closest to the neck.

Above the cuff ornamentation, half chevrons measuring one-half inch wide, and of the same colour as the facing of the branch, department, or corps in which the individual served at the time he completed his enlistment, extended diagonally from seam to seam. These were to indicate each term of service (five years during this period, and three years subsequently). A quarter-inch space separated additional service

chevrons. A red one-eighth inch strip on either side of the regular chevron designated service in war; in this case, the centre of the chevron corresponded to the colour of the wearer's branch during his combat duty: yellow for cavalry, light blue for infantry, and so forth.

Finally, rank chevrons of the same cadet gray cloth as the facing were placed above each elbow, points down, the three bars separated by black silk chain-stitching. Above these appeared a crescent (horizontal, points up) of the same colour as the chevrons, formed as a cut-on behind a dark blue wool cloth ground of the same material as the coat. The crescent seemed appropriate since it represented plenty in ancient times. White metal crescents likewise went on each of the gray collar flashes, once more worn points up.

A larger version of the device, held with brass wires, appeared on the front of the dress cap. The cap itself featured a black leather bill and a black leather chin strap with sheet brass buckle. The strap was held in place by two small brass buttons of the type found on the

*Above: Cloth versions of the chevrons, with forwards-pointing crescents, were also adopted in 1885 for use on untress uniform, in the original cadet gray shade of the 1872 regulations. (Photo: Glen Stranson)*

cuff of the coat, either sewn on or wired to the body, which was of dark blue wool over a stiff felt or pasteboard. Cadet gray mohair trim ran horizontally around the crown and the lower edge, while perpendicular strands connected these at the back and each side of the body. A small gilt metal eagle attached to the front of the cap at the crown, while a pompon of cadet gray surmounted the eagle. At the top of the cap a circular black japanned ventilator provided some air circulation.

Sky blue mixture wool ironsets of the same cut and fabric as issued during the Civil War bore one-inch cadet gray stripes at the outside seams. White berlin gloves; black square-toed low quarter shoes; a black harness leather belt with an 1851 pattern non-commissioned officer's belt plate and black leather sword frog completed the dress uniform. The sidarm





The pattern example maintained by the Quartermaster Corps to serve as a model for all Commissary Sergeants' coats of the 1885 style. This specimen has the general service buttons which began to appear in 1888 and were retained until 1903. After 1884 the gold lace chevrons for the coat, and the cloth chevrons for the blouse and overcoat, were produced in 'mirrored' pairs, since the crescents now faced forwards. The applied German silver crescent on the eagle helmet plate of 1881, with points up, was nevertheless retained. (Smithsonian Institution)

was a Model 1840 non-commissioned officer's sword with leather (or occasionally black japanned metal) scabbard fitted with brass throat and drag.

## LATER MODIFICATIONS

For all intents and purposes, no changes occurred for the next three years. Then, in 1876, new pattern trousers and a relocation of the belt loops to a position more toward the rear of the coat constituted the first deviation from the original uniform specifications. A new trouser pattern also came into existence in that same year, based upon the deliberations of a board which convened in 1875.<sup>(1)</sup>

In 1880 the coat once more

evolved, white piping being prescribed for the top and bottom of the collar, the front and rear edges, and the edges of the cuff facings, shoulder straps and belt loops.<sup>(2)</sup> The crescent on the rank chevron was also changed to white to correspond with the new piping scheme.

Just a year later an even more noticeable modification came about with the adoption of a dark felt body helmet with sheet iron brass side buttons bearing the crescent, a brass base and spike, a leather chin strap with sheet brass buckle, and a staff eagle plate which displayed a crescent overlay of white metal (German silver) on the breast.<sup>(3)</sup> This headpiece replaced the full dress cap thereafter, as supplies became available.

All remained relatively stable until 1884, when word came from Washington that belt loops would be removed, and an improved cut of trousers would be made.<sup>(4)</sup>

Collar devices were to be discontinued.<sup>(5)</sup> Then, in 1885, regulations called for a dark shade of blue for trousers; and a new style dress coat, with cadet gray facing extending around the entire length of the collar, and facings on the tail running to the bottom of the skirt rather than stopping a few inches above this point.<sup>(6)</sup> Gold lace chevrons replaced facing-colour cloth; and the crescents rotated, the points now facing forward rather than upwards, so that the new design was issued in 'mirrored' pairs.<sup>(7)</sup> By 1887 a white linen dress collar was added as an accessory.<sup>(8)</sup> The only major change after this date was the adoption of staff type coat buttons with rims, adopted on 10 March 1888.<sup>(9)</sup> Thereafter, the uniform remained the same until 1903 when sweeping new regulations ushered in an entirely new design. **MI**

## Notes

(1) Officers had been convened by Special Orders No. 264, 27 December 1875, to look at several problems related to the uniform. In addition to recommendations about relocating the belt loops the board also suggested lengthening the waists of uniform coats by 'from three-eighths of an inch to three-quarters of an inch according to size.' They also sought an improved trouser pattern with 'frog mouthed pockets, watch pockets, strap and

buckle on the back, a slight spring at the foot, and no waistband.' *Annual Report of the Secretary of War*, 1876 Vol. 1, (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1876), 204-205.

(2) Specification No. 11, 27 February 1880.

(3) See General Orders No. 4, Adjutant General's Office, 7 January 1881 and General Orders No. 52, Adjutant General's Office, 14 June 1881.

(4) *Annual Report of the Secretary of War*, 1884, Vol. 1, (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1884), 610-612.

(5) Circular No. 11, Adjutant General's Office, 10 December 1884.

(6) *Annual Report of the Secretary of War*, 1885, Vol. 1, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1885), 603 made it clear that the lighter colour of trousers would continue to be issued until supplies were exhausted although the darker cloth pairs would be released as they became available. The new uniform coat with full faced collar and longer tail facings, authorized on 5 March 1885, soon became available, at first by converting pre-1885 pattern coats. *Ibid.*, 673.

(7) The original specifications for gold lace chevrons called for the crescent to be worn points up (Specification 127, RG 92, Clothing and Equipment

Branch, Letters Sent, 1884, Vol. III, Entry 1009, NARS) and evidently this was the case with the prototypes for new lace versions. Quartermaster General S. B. Holabird to Adjutant General of the Army, 26 December 1884, *ibid.* Soon thereafter, however, the design changed to feature the points facing outward, the pairs to be made in mirror images. Quartermaster General S. B. Holabird to Lieutenant Colonel M. I. Ludington, 28 January 1885, Letters Sent, 1885, Vol. 1, *ibid.*

(8) Adopted 24 March 1887, as indicated in *US Army Uniforms and Equipment, 1889: Specifications for Clothing, Camp and Garrison Equipment, and Clothing and Equipment Materials* (Philadelphia: US Quartermaster General, 1889), 151.

(9) *Ibid.*, 193. The change was mentioned in 1887 but specifications did not appear until the following year at which time the general staff button would begin to replace the previous design.

**Below:** The 1881 pattern dress helmet worn with the coat adopted in 1885, with full collar facing (without devices), gold chevrons and crescents on the sleeves, and no belt loops. The dark blue 1885 trousers were not immediately available. (Photo: Glen Swanson)





# The Unknown War: Portuguese Paratroops in Africa, 1961-74 (2)

DAVID E. SPENCER & MIGUEL MACHADO

## D-DAY

'Around 1045 hours we hoisted up onto the helis and were delivered to the landing zone next to Lake Nedia. The 1st Group immediately moved out along a 140 degree azimuth and set up ambushes about 5 clicks from the landing zone. At 1400 hours, two guerrillas appeared escorting a man and two women. The lead guerrilla was easily captured, but the second attempted to flee and was gunned down. Two Simonov carbines were captured. The group immediately interrogated the captured guerrilla who said he knew the location of "Camp Vietnam".

'At 1630 hours the entire company assembled and started marching toward "Camp Vietnam" according to the indications of the captured guerrilla. At 1730 hours the company set up ambush positions.

## D + 1

'At 0430 hours the ambushes were abandoned and the march continued toward "Camp Vietnam". At 0530 hours the company took "Camp Vietnam". The camp consisted of around 30 huts that appeared to be recently abandoned. The camp was searched and seven hand grenades and 100 small arms rounds were discovered. At 0800 hours ambushes were set up and a search was started along a 285 degree azimuth. At 1730 hours the company set up their ambushes for the night.

## D + 2

'At 0500 hours the ambushes were brought in and sweeping operations were continued. At around 0730 hours the old field hospital of Vilanculos was discovered, consisting of around 20 huts. They appeared to have been abandoned for a long time. The operation was continued, and at 0830 hours a granary was discovered containing 200 kilos of millet, seeds and rice, which was all destroyed.

'At 1015 hours two armed insurgents were detected. An enveloping manoeuvre was carried out which surprised the guerrillas. One was shot down, but the other had time to fire his bazooka at our troops without producing any casualties. However, in the confusion of the explosion, he managed to escape even though he had been wounded by our soldiers. The dead insurgent was carrying a Simonov carbine, which was captured.

'At 1530 hours two camps with

The normal mode of operations for the Portuguese paras was the helicopter assault. This basically consisted of a company level insertion in Guiné and Mozambique, and platoon level insertions in Angola, into a known area of guerrilla activity. Here the paras, depending on the situation, would conduct sweeping operations, set up ambushes or conduct reconnaissance. To give the reader an idea of what a 'typical' mission was like, a transcript of part of the official commander's log of BCP 31 is insightful. The transcript describes part of Operation 'Osiris 3' which took place in Mozambique between 22 and 29 July 1971.

about 10 huts each were destroyed.

## D + 3

'At 0500 hours the company marched to the recovery area. As they marched a guerrilla and several local civilians were detected. A hasty ambush was set up in which the guerrilla, armed with a Simonov, was killed and a woman and child were captured. At approximately 1200 hours the

company was heli-transported back in Nangide.'

## ASSAULT AND INTERDICTION

The above transcript aptly describes the average operation, which consisted of long hours of marching and searching interspersed with sporadic, small-scale clashes. On many operations no

contact with the enemy was made; and missions were considered successful if no enemy were encountered, but weapons were captured or bases and food stores were destroyed.

However, some helicopter assault missions resulted in heavy clashes, like Operation 'Ciclone II' in Guiné-Bissau on 25 February 1968. Portuguese intelligence had received information that a substantial group of enemy and a large weapons cache existed in areas known respectively as Calfine and Cafal. At 1020 hours the 122nd Company of BCP 12 was transported by helicopter from Bissau to Cafal. Meanwhile, enemy forces were prevented from leaving Calfine by Air Force T-6 trainer/bombers. Calfine was a patch of jungle surrounded by open ground, so any attempt to break out was stopped by strafing and bombing runs. Cafal was swept, and found to be empty of either enemy personnel or weapons except for one guerrilla, who was captured and indicated that the group at Calfine had been reinforced. Upon receiving this information, and seeing that the area was indeed empty, the 122nd Company marched eastward along a track to Calfine.

Meanwhile, the 121st Company had begun their assault on Calfine, by helicopter, at 1100 hours. As the first wave of helicopters and gunships approached the objective the target zone was bombed and strafed by T-6s. By the time the smoke and dust had cleared the helicopters were in a holding pattern, waiting for the commands of Lt. Col. Costa Campos who was circling overhead in a DO-27 spotter plane. A trench was soon located, and a group of paras (a reinforced platoon) dispatched to assault the enemy position. Despite having to land in open marshy terrain, the group aggressively charged the enemy trench and took it, killing four insurgents and capturing two. Soon after this initial



*A para of BCP 12 in Guiné — this typical terrain made ground approach and non-trivial marches slow and exhausting. The mustache, and the wedding ring, suggest that this man is an officer or NCO rather than a young conscript who has volunteered for the paras. (All photographs courtesy of the authors)*



Guiné-Bissau: captured insurgents, stripped to their underwear, are led out of an Alouette III helicopter.

action a gunship spouted a whole complex of trenches and bunkers, and the two remaining groups were landed on the western side of the complex. Closely supported by Alouette III gunships with 20mm door cannons, the 121st Company began systematically to clear each position. While this attack was in progress the 122nd Company arrived at the eastern end of the objective, and began clearing out positions here. Fierce fighting continued throughout the afternoon, which resulted in 40 insurgents killed and 19 captured, along with a large quantity of equipment. A whole enemy bi-group was destroyed.

Another mission assigned to para units, especially in Guiné-Bissau, was the interdiction of enemy supplies. Like the Vietnamese, the PAIGC had their own 'Ho Chi Minh trail'. This route, from Guinea Conakry to the southern region of Guiné-Bissau, was known to the Portuguese as the Guilege Corridor.

On 28 April 1966, during Operation 'Grifo', a platoon of paras left the base at Mejo just after midnight and made their way to the ambush position by 0500 hours. Accompanying the patrol was Capt. Luis Tinoco de Faria, who was accompanying the troops as an observer. Their mission was to set up an ambush position to interdict a PAIGC column. This position was set up in a tree line on the edge of a slight incline, offering

good cover and fields of fire. After remaining motionless for over five hours, the paras were startled to hear periodic bursts of automatic rifle fire about 5km in the distance. Apparently a large column of PAIGC guerrillas was conducting reconnaissance by fire. The firing grew closer and closer, and finally rounds started falling very near to where the paras were hiding.

The paras held their fire, and allowed a group of ten guerrillas to walk into the ambush zone. A column of approximately 60 guerrillas was sighted following behind the advanced group, so the paras maintained their fire discipline to wait for the larger prize. As the vanguard of the larger column started coming into the ambush zone, a dog leading the column began barking in the direction of the paras. The guerrillas attempted to react, but the paras opened fire, killing seven of the ten leading element. One of the remaining three shot and wounded Capt. Tinoco de Faria; as he attempted to move he was wounded again — as it transpired, mortally. The three remaining guerrillas were quickly dispatched.

However, the rest of the insurgent column reacted quickly and attempted to flank the para position. Coming under uncomfortably close machine gun and mortar fire, and seeing the grave condition of Capt. Tinoco de Faria, the paras decided to withdraw. The guerrillas followed in pursuit. Realizing the Portuguese were weighed down with wounded, the insur-

gents attempted to destroy the para platoon with a hammer and anvil manoeuvre: while part of their force continued to pursue the withdrawing paras, another group moved to set up an ambush on their path of retreat. As the paras crossed the Tenthege River a group of around 20 guerrillas opened fire on them. However, the MG42 gunner and 37mm rocket launcher operator immediately put down heavy suppressive fire, each killing two guerrillas — the latter with a direct hit on a termite hill behind which the guerrillas were hiding. After this clash the guerrillas desisted from pursuing the paras. Contact was made with a DO-27 spunter plane flying overhead and a helicopter was called in to pick up Capt. Tinoco de Faria, but he died while waiting for evacuation.

#### Cuban prisoner

In November 1969 an interdiction

*Guiné-Bissau: a para squad — two teams of four — wait for transport into the area of operations. Some wear US M1956 web suspenders, others the old M1943. Left foreground, near snail and rubber patrol boots — most paras seem to have preferred to keep their jump boots. Right foreground, note US mako-aalkie; this is probably the squad leader. The man bending over is adjusting straps on his RPG-2 rocket bag, and the tail of the launch tube can be seen leaning against an oil drum. Sitting on the drum is the light machine gun No. 1, carrying an H&R 21, in this case belt- rather than drum-fed.*





A grenadier of BCP 12 clambors aboard an Alouette III, a Spanish Insulaza grenadier slipped early in the muzzle of his G3; a locally made pack for extra grenades is slung on his back, he has the US-style three-pocket pouch on his right hip, and a hand grenade slipped to his left ahead of this. He wears rubber and surde jungle patrol boots — as illustrated in Part 1 of this article, 'MI' No. 47 — and a knit cap comforter. The more conventionally kitted para on the right has US M1943 webbing, and an olive rubberised pouch folded over the back of his belt.

mission codenamed Operation 'Jive' produced an intriguing prize. A battalion operation was planned, with one company, the 121st of BCP 12, setting up flank security, while the 122nd Company set up an ambush position in the corridor. Both companies were inserted by helicopter on the 17th, and after a short march headed down for the night. Early the next morning the two companies marched to their final positions. The 122nd stopped several hundred metres from the ambush zone, and a reconnaissance party was sent out to choose and prepare the best location. This included burying 60mm mortar bombs

which had been converted into command-detonated mines, and setting up a tape recorder to record movement and strange noises. The group was led by the company commander, Capt. Bessa. As they were conducting these activities, two insurgents were sighted casually strolling towards the paras. One was a black man with an AK-47; and the other, a white man with a pistol, and a cigar in his mouth.

Capt. Bessa quickly decided that capturing or killing a white man was more important than ambushing a larger column that was surely following behind. The captain ordered his MG 42 gunner to open fire. The black guerrilla was killed instantly, but the white, wounded in the shoulder, attempted to flee. The paras quickly followed and finally caught up with the man by following his blood trail; they found him collapsed from the loss of blood. A helicopter was quickly despatched to pick up the prisoner, and rushed him to the military hospital at Bissau. The mysterious white man turned out to be Capt. Rodrigues Peralta, a Cuban adviser to PAIGC. He was a valuable catch for the Portuguese, as he provided irrefutable proof of Cuban involvement with PAIGC, and



valuable information about Cuban activities in Guiné-Bissau.

#### VARYING TACTICS

While for reasons of space we are obliged to cover the activities of the Portuguese paras in three provinces in one article, the reader should keep in mind that essentially the Portuguese paras were fighting three separate wars, and so tactics and operations varied from province to province. In Mozambique and Guiné-Bissau the paras rarely operated in units smaller than company size, while in Angola the normal operation was conducted by platoon-size elements. This was partly due to the fact that in Mozambique and Guiné-Bissau the Portuguese faced one unified guerrilla group, while in Angola there were three insurgent groups who often spent more time fighting among themselves than against the Portuguese. This factionalism allowed the Portuguese intelligence services to infiltrate the Angolan insurgent groups quite effectively.

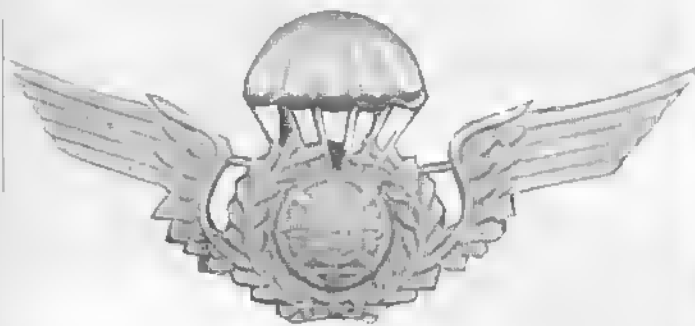
Throughout the war, the Air Force continued to hone its fighting capabilities and to apply new tactical concepts to operations. Among these was the use of dogs to

Para fording a waist-deep stream, common in Guiné-Bissau; note that he has an off or trucked inside the split neck flap of his 'Bigard'-style camouflage cap.

track guerrilla columns. A number of operations were carried out which produced good results between 1967 and 1970; but there were never a sufficient number of dogs, the training was inadequate, and there were serious problems with using these animals in the tropical climate. In Mozambique and Angola human trackers were used; the initial cadres were trained in Rhodesia and then established schools in Portuguese territory. Sometimes the trackers worked together with the dogs to pick up insurgent trails.

In 1972 an attempt was made to unify all of the new tactics into one efficient military machine. This new unit was designated Corpo Especial de Contra Infiltração (Special Anti-Infiltration Corp or CECI) and was based at Tolo, Angola. The aim was to unify the efforts of the different tactical and intelligence groups to produce good results. The basic operational system was that the DGIS (Portuguese intelligence service)





Top: badge worn on the paratroopers' dark green beret from 1966 — silver eagle, gold wreath. Centre: 1966 model jump wings — silver wings, red gold. Bottom: gold branch badge worn from 1966 on the shoulder strap rank slides.

would pass information to the CECI about an infiltrating guerrilla column. A tracker unit would be dispatched immediately to look for the infiltrating column, and combat groups would be placed on stand-by in the helicopters to attack the enemy column when located. Tactical air support would also be placed on stand-by to support the combat group if they needed it. By 1974 the name was changed to Unidade Tática Contra Infiltração (Tactical Anti-Infiltration Unit or UTCI). CECI/UTCI produced good results, and was created just in time.

With the Lisbon coup of that year the majority of the Portuguese Army ceased operations. Thus the

two major rival Angolan guerrilla groups, the MPLA and the FNLA<sup>(1)</sup>, were free to build up forces for the final interecine power struggle once the Portuguese withdrew. UTCI was one of the few units left in Angola that was available to maintain some semblance of order for the Portuguese. It was during this time that BCP 21 saw some of their heaviest fighting of the African war. In one operation codenamed 'Diana' in June 1974, information given by the DGI led the Air Force trackers to a grove where an FNLA guerrilla column had stopped to rest and eat (they had slain an elephant and were cooking it). The paras of the 3rd Company, BCP 21 were able to close in and initiate fire without being detected. However, the insurgent group proved to be quite large and many escaped. In a five-day operation involving the 3rd and 2nd Companies of BCP 21, the paras effectively destroyed a 180-man guerrilla column, cap-



tured over a dozen prisoners (many suspected of being Zairean soldiers, as they only spoke French), and a large quantity of Communist bloc and Western equipment. While the operation did little to stop the overall build-up of the MPLA and FNLA, it did prove the effectiveness of UTCI, and sent a message that not all Portuguese units had lost the will to fight.

Finally, in 1975, the last Portuguese military units withdrew from Africa. Among these were the paras.

The Portuguese paras, like any professionally trained élite unit, performed well in combat. Throughout the 14 years of combat in the African provinces they maintained an approximate 20:1 kill ratio: the paras claimed 2,679 insurgents killed and 947 wounded for 133 paras killed and 732 wounded in action. They also captured approximately 2,000

Enríel, a senior corporal, receiving a decoration for African service. The dark blue rank slides have three cam-walks-pointing chevrons of rank in silver, below the branch pin. Black beret tapes were sometimes seen replaced by the Army infantry branch's red and green national colours.

weapons of different types. The paras were among the very first troops to go into action in 1961, and were among the last to be withdrawn in 1975. While one may not agree with the political cause of the Portuguese in Africa, one must admire the Portuguese paras for doing their job professionally despite the modest resources at their disposal. **MI**

(1) MPLA = Popular Liberation Movement of Angola; this group was backed by the Cubans and the Soviets. FNLA = National Front for the Liberation of Angola. This was the successor of UNLA, and was supported by the Chinese, Zaire, and Western nations in hiding in the United States.

# Michael Wittmann

GREGORY T. JONES  
Paintings by PAUL HANNON

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, 'Sepp' Dietrich is recorded as remarking laconically to Albert Speer that Hitler had 'simply let his best soldiers dash into the fire'. For confirmation of this remark one need look no further than the career and eventual fate of Michael Wittmann — the greatest tank commander of the war, and probably of all time.



Michael Wittmann was born into a farming family on 22 April 1914 at Vogelthal in the Oberpfalz region of southern Germany. He was baptised and educated as a Catholic. After attending elementary and secondary school he worked on the farm with his father Johann for some time, before volunteering for the Freiwilligen Arbeitsdienst (Volunteer Labour Service). His service with the FAD — an obligatory duty — lasted from February to July 1934; and that October he began his military service, with 10. Kompanie, Infanterie-Regiment 19 at Freising. On 1 November 1935

he was promoted Gefreiter. His military service ended in September 1936.

On 1 April 1937 he joined the Allgemeine-SS (SS-Sturm 1/92 at Ingolstadt); and within a week was accepted as a recruit for 17. Kompanie of the elite armed SS guard regiment 'Leibstandarte-SS Adolf Hitler', undergoing training at Berlin's Lichterfelde Barracks. He attained the rank of Staffel-Sturmführer (roughly, corporal) on 9 November 1937. At the outbreak of war in September 1939 he was serving as an Unterscharführer (roughly, sergeant) in the armoured car platoon (Panzerspäh-Zug) of the

'LAI'. Following the 1940 campaign in France and the Low Countries the 'LAI' received its first armoured self-propelled assault guns; and it was during Operation 'Marita' in Greece in spring 1941 that Wittmann got his first experience as commander of a tracked AFV.

## 'BARBAROSSA'

When in late June 1941 the 'LAI' crossed the Soviet frontier as part of XIV Panzer Korps, and took part in the south-easterly drive deep into the Ukraine, Sergeant Wittmann quickly distinguished himself as a cool and resourceful soldier. On 12 July 1941 he was awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class; the 1st Class followed on 8 September; and he was wounded (apparently for a second time, although on neither occasion seriously) during the Leibstandarte's advance on Rostov. Coming under the tutelage of SS-Sturmführer (major) Max Wünsche, the CO of the Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung, and SS-Obersturmführer Rettlinger of 3. Batterie, he was soon given command of his own half-train. An indication of Wittmann's skill as a vehicle commander came early in the campaign, when on one occasion he beat off an attack by 18 Soviet tanks, 'brewing up' six of them by rapid fire and manoeuvre despite the relative handicap of commanding a turretless assault gun with basically non-traversing main armament.

In June 1942 Wittmann's leadership potential was recognised by assignment to the SS-Junkerschule (officers' training academy) at Bad Tölz in Bavaria, completing his training there on 5 September. He was commissioned second lieutenant (SS-Untersturmführer) with effect from 21 December 1942. It is recorded that he had always expressed eagerness to command a heavy tank; and since the Leibstandarte had been allotted an integral company of the new super-heavy Tiger tanks in November 1942, he soon got his wish. By March 1943, after a spell in the Panzer Ersatz unit and the Heavy Tank Recovery Company, he was back in action in the front of a Tiger E of 13. (schwere) Kompanie, SS-Panzer-Regiment 1 'LAI', during the German operation to close a 300km gap torn in the front by the disaster at Stalingrad.

The objective of the operation was the recapture of the cities of Kharkov and Byelgorod; and the 'LAI' Tiger company reached the western fringes of Kharkov by 8 March. It seems, however, that Wittmann did not take part in the successful assault on the city;

attrition had deprived the Leibstandarte of all battleworthy Tigers — indeed, the divisional commander 'Sepp' Dietrich was left with only some 14 medium PzKw III and IV tanks for the final push into Kharkov.

## 'ZITADELLE' AND AFTERMATH

The recapture of Kharkov left a huge Soviet-held salient protruding into the German front line; and on 5 July the Wehrmacht unleashed the long-prepared (and by then compromised) Operation 'Zitadelle' to pinch off this Kursk Salient. Massive resources were deployed on both sides in what became the greatest tank battle in history. The advance against the southern shoulder of the salient, from Byelgorod towards Prokhoravka, was made by Army Group South (4th Panzer Army and Group Kempf), and spearheaded by the greatest concentration of Tigers yet assembled — 101 Tiger Es of the heavy companies of the 1. SS-Panzer-Division 'LAI', 2. and 3. SS-Panzer-Grenadier Divisions 'Das Reich' and 'Totenkopf', and the Army 'Grossdeutschland' Division.

On the first day Wittmann's Tiger knocked out eight Soviet tanks and seven anti-tank guns. Wittmann was known to believe that knocking out an anti-tank gun was 'twice as good' as knocking out a tank, since the gun was much harder to spot, and hence could get off more shots before being located. The ultimately doomed northwards advance towards Prokhoravka was to give him ample opportunity to test himself against this challenge: the German axis of advance lay through deep, concentric rings of anti-tank guns and tanks dug in hull-down. Through bravery, and 'the luck that often accompanies the man who masters his craft', Wittmann and his crew survived five days of fire and desolation. When he emerged from his turret on the fifth day, blackened and exhausted, he at least had the satisfaction of knowing that he had left in his wake the wreckage of 28 destroyed enemy tanks and 36 of

## Centre left:

The earliest known photo of Wittmann, wearing black Verfügungstruppe uniform with the early black/white waist piping on the collar and patches; the rank insignia of Staffel-Sturmführer dates the photo as after 9 November 1937. The photographer's marker indicates a height of 1.76m (5ft.7½ins.) The only known colour photo of Wittmann, taken at Führerhauptquartier by Walter Franz after Hitler decorated him with his Oakleaves, shows dark blond hair and light brown eyes. (Photo: BDC)

the hated anti-tank guns. But although 4th Panzer Army created three penetrations, none was more than about ten miles deep; and on 12 July the massive Soviet counterattack on Prokhorovka by 5th and 6th Guards Tank Armies brought Gen. Flott's divisions to a halt in a vast battle involving some 1,300 tanks and assault guns.

The next day Hitler recognised that the gamble had failed; and that the Allied landings in Sicily on 10 July demanded the transfer of forces to the West. The hated Leibstandarte was one of the formations sent — briefly — to Italy, where they rested and refuelled in strategic reserve before returning to the Eastern Front in November 1943. By this time the Wehrmacht's position had deteriorated catastrophically.

Wittmann's company became part of a force tasked with the recapture of the city of Bursilov, deep within a salient jutting westwards from Kiev. On 13 November his Tiger was involved in feverish action, knocking out ten T34s and five anti-tank guns before noon, and a further ten tanks and seven guns by nightfall. There were targets in plenty, as the Byelorussian Front (Gen. Rokossovski) and 1st Ukrainian Front (Gen. Vatutin) forced a bridgehead 100 miles deep and 150 miles wide over the Dnieper. Battles raged around Zhitomir; and at the turn of the year Vatutin tore a 40-mile gap between 4th and 1st Panzer Armies.

Despite a personal tally of 56 enemy tanks destroyed between July 1943 and 7 January 1944, it took a further notable success in dealing with a Russian breakthrough to bring Wittmann recommendation for the award of the Knight's Cross. Displaying, in the words of the *Vorschlag*, 'magnificent bravery', he destroyed three T34s and an assault gun on 8 January, and another six tanks on the 9th when the platoon under his command halted the breakthrough. He had little time to savour the recommendation, however; by 13 January he had destroyed his 88th enemy tank while stopping another deep penetration (and lost several teeth in the process, smashed against the inside of the cupola in the pitching Tiger; the prosthesis which replaced them was instrumental in the positive identification of his remains some forty years later). On the 14th he and his trusty gunner Balthasar Woll were both presented with the *Ritterkreuz* by divisional commander Theodone Wisch, to the hearty congratulations of their regimental commander Joachim Peiper.

The more Soviet tanks poured across the periscope-field of his

Tiger, the higher his total of victories climbed; and during the savage struggles of early 1944 there was no shortage of Soviet tanks. By the end of January Wittmann had destroyed over 100 enemy tanks during his service on the

and refitting after almost five months' continuous heavy combat. In this interim Wittmann (and Woll) were given an audience with Hitler at the Führerhauptquartier, Wittmann being formally decorated with the



Eastern Front. On 30 January he was sent the following telegram: 'In gratitude for your heroic action in the battle for the future of our people, I award you the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross as the 380th soldier of the German Armed Forces, Adolf Hitler'. The press release accompanying the announcement of the award attributed Wittmann's 'magnificent performance' to his 'aggressively offensive stance and praiseworthy marksmanship'.

On 17 February, promoted to first lieutenant (SS-Oberschmittführer), Wittmann was in temporary command of the Leibstandarte's Heavy Tank Company when the unit helped crack the Soviet ring around the Tchernassy Pocket, freeing some 35,000 trapped German soldiers; in the process he accounted for another nine tanks of the Soviet 5th Guards Tank Corps.

#### THE WESTERN FRONT

In the spring of 1944 the 'LAIT' was pulled out of the line and sent to Belgium and France for rest

Oakleaves on this occasion, in the presence of his old assault gun battalion commander Max Wünsche, and the commander of his new unit — schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 101, the Tiger battalion of 1 SS-Panzer-Korps, forming that spring in France. When the Allies landed in Normandy on 6 June 1944 Wittmann was commanding 2. Kompanie of s.SS-Pz-Abt. 101 at Beauvais.

The battalion made a difficult road march towards the invasion front via Paris, suffering from Allied air attacks near Versailles on 8 June. They did not arrive at the front until the night of 12/13 June, taking cover in woods near Villers-Bocage. The next day Michael Wittmann would perform one of the most remarkable individual feats of arms of the entire war.

Recommencing towards the village of Villers-Bocage with his only four available battleworthy Tigers and a single PzKw IV, Wittmann was intent on checking reported movement round the

left flank of the Panzer-Lehr-Division by British 7th Armoured Division. He reached the village to find lead elements of 22nd Arm'd. Bde. — 4th County of London Yeomanry, with Cromwell and Firefly tanks, and A Co., 1st Rifle Brigade — spread out along the narrow roads. A Sqn., 4CLY were east of the village, B Sqn. west of it, and RHQ in the main street.

In a confused action lasting probably only half an hour, in two separate attacks between which he withdrew to rearm and refuel from his other tanks, Wittmann in his lone Tiger rampaged back and forth through the village and its outskirts, engaging all three elements of 4CLY and an accompanying column of halftracks, carriers and trucks. Despite taking several hits he destroyed at least 21 tanks, 28 other armoured vehicles and many more 'soft skins', single-handedly halting the advance of 7th Armoured Division. His gunner that day was once again 'Bobby' Woll, now an SS-Oberscharführer tank commander, but riding with Wittmann on the 13th as his own Tiger was unserviceable.

On the same afternoon Wittmann returned to Villers-Bocage with two other Tigers and a PzKw IV, but this time he ran into an ambush laid by Lt. Cotton's troop of B Sqn., 4CLY and a 6pdr. anti-tank gun crew of the Queen's Royal Regiment. Firing at point-blank range from the mouths of side alleys as the Panzers passed down the main street, the 6pdr. knocked out Wittmann's tank and B Sqn. gunners the other three. Wittmann and his crew escaped unscathed on foot, however, since the British were lacking infantry in close support. The British were later forced to withdraw westwards; 7th Armoured's attempted advance had been blocked.

Wittmann was immediately recommended for the Swords to his Knight's Cross and Oakleaves by Gen. Fritz Bayerlein of Panzer-Lehr. Not only had he secured the left flank of that formation; he had also, 'by his immediate decision,

#### Centre:

SS-Oberschmittführer Wittmann as a company commander in the schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 101, photographed probably in Belgium in spring 1944; beside him is his famous gunner, Balthasar Woll. His black vehicle uniform is now correctly piped with aluminium-tinted cord round the collar, and bears the correct collar patches of this rank. The headgear is a field grey officer's Schirmmütze with white — not Panzer pink — piping, and has had the stiffeners, cords and buttons removed. (Photo: Archiv Ott-Gratoff)



carried out with the greatest valour, averred a critical danger to the whole of the front [covered by] 1. SS-Panzer-Korps, as at that time the Korps had no other reserves available'. Wittmann received his Swords a week later, together with promotion to captain. A few days before the presentation, by corps commander Gen. 'Sepp' Dietrich, a correspondent from the Waffen-SS newspaper *Das Schwarze Korps* was sent to interview Wittmann. Allowing for the ripe language of such reports, familiar from wartime publications on both sides, the account is not without interest:

'I saw him for the first time in a park at Baron in Normandy [Baron-sur-Odon, corps headquarters between 9 and 15 June]. He ran through the rain with limbed shoulders and hands in his pockets because it was cool.... Two hours' sleep on a field bed somewhere were not sufficient to remove the shadows of exhaustion and of hard combat from his face. He stood before us, of middle height, his hair pale blond, a face in which modesty, calm, and self-assurance could be read.

Just hours before he had destroyed twenty-one British tanks; and the most unusual thing to observe about him was that curious after-effect of great exertion, which had left on him not only a physical effect, but also on his heart and soul. He knows completely what he has accomplished, he knows the value of his success. Yet anyone who talks to him as if to a 'hero' will find that Michael Wittmann regards him quietly... with some confusion, and then with rejection. He doesn't like dramas, the 'big words' and the fuss people make of him. He doesn't know how to respond to such people; and he walks away.

'I will never forget hearing him tell how he stood alone with his single tank in the cover of the forest and had a marvellous view of a passing British tank regiment. When he spoke his words were weighed carefully; and he seemed very anxious not to make any mistake, but to describe events with the greatest truth and precision possible. Vehicle behind vehicle, 60 enemy tanks in rapid movement along a road barely twenty metres away.... Great odds had not intimidated him before, but this was suicide: who had ever attacked a whole regiment before? Should he attack?

"'I couldn't do anything else", said Wittmann simply, in a completely matter-of-fact way, and very sincerely. He didn't have to stop and think over what to do: "he had a sixth sense in assessing a situation, which was a unique gift in his type of fighting."

## THE LAST FIGHT

On 7 August Field Marshal Montgomery made another attempt to push south from Caen to Falaise to cut off German forces facing British 2nd Army. Standing in the path of an estimated 600 Allied tanks committed to Operation 'Totalize' was an armoured battle group including s.SS-Pz-Abr.101 and the remains of 12. SS-Panzer-Division 'Hitlerjugend'. The Kampfgruppe's total of some 60 German AFVs included the ten serviceable Tigers left to Wittmann, now in command of his battalion. His orders on 8 August were to take Cintheaux on the Caen-Falaise road (N158) and to occupy heights north of that village.

While Wittmann conferred with SS-Oberführer Kurt Meyer and SS-Sturmhaupführer Waldmüller of the 'Hitlerjugend', it became clear from Allied air activity that massive bombing raids were to precede the Allied advance. The German attack was immediately brought forward, and Wittmann led his Tigers north up the Caen road. Racing beyond Allied artillery fire, and with the aerial bombardment falling short on Allied positions, the Tigers engaged Sherman's of 1st Canadian Armoured Division advancing towards Cintheaux, using the superior range of their 88mm guns. Eventually supported by Panthers of I/SS-Pz-Rgt.12, they took Cintheaux after several hours. Outrunk to the west, they withdrew that evening to wooded cover near Quesnay; and Michael Wittmann was reported missing in action.

As in the case of Manfred von Richthofen, the exact circumstances under which Wittmann met his death have always been the subject of controversy. He has been claimed for the British, Canadians and Poles — for tank units, and RAF bombers and fighter-bombers. Remarkable post-war research in the 1980s, primarily by M. Jean-Paul Pallud and, separately, by Mr. Leslie Taylor, have now established the truth.

It appears that Wittmann, leading four Tigers, penetrated northwards beyond Cintheaux to the hamlet of Gannestril, passing it east of the road, with orchards on his right and the hamlet on his left. Unknown to him, the orchards to his east had already been occupied by elements of the British 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry, whose squadron commander had the presence of mind to bring up a 17pdr. Sherman Firefly to deal with the Tigers. As Wittmann's ranks advanced they crossed the front of the Northamptonshire Yeomanry; and in a matter of 12 minutes the

Firefly gunner, exhibiting marksmanship of which Wittmann and Woll would have approved, destroyed three of the Tigers. A photograph taken later shows Wittmann's tank, '007', clearly destroyed by an internal explosion, the turret upside down many yards from the hull. There were no survivors.

In 1981 M. Pallud was able to pinpoint the spot, finding fragments of the Tiger in the field; and established the original location of the battlefield graves in which Wittmann and his crew were buried beside the main road. It later transpired that the bodies had not been removed by the VDK (German war graves commission) for reburial; and in March 1983 investigators found the bodies of Michael Wittmann.

Paul Hannon's reconstructions on the rear cover show Michael Wittmann as (top) SS-Untersturmführer (second lieutenant) with 13. (schwere) Kompanie, SS-Panzer Regiment 1 'Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler' at Berdichev, Russia, on 14 January 1944 — the day he was presented with his Knight's Cross by Theodore Wirth, marking his destruction of 66 enemy tanks between July 1943 and 9 January 1944. (In the four days since the latter date he had taken the total score to 88). A clear print of the crew group photo taken in front of his Tiger tank shows several non-regulation features suggesting that despite his commission he is wearing as working dress a fairly casually rebagged uniform from his days as an NCO. The cap is the 1938 field grey service cap for NCOs, distinguished by its small crown, cloth-covered peak, and white piping for all arms of service; this practical and popular headgear was often worn by officers. The black armoured vehicle uniform has the vertical closure and relatively small, rounded collars and lapels characteristic of SS manufacture. The photo shows that Wittmann's jacket lacked officer's aluminium cord collar piping; and the collar patches — SS runes on his right, three white metal pips of rank on his left — also lack this cord edging, suggesting that he has simply changed the rank insignia on his old NCO uniform. He has added the correct shoulder straps of rank: dull silver cord piped with Panzer rose pink, on a secondary black underlay, with the gilt 'LAH' cypher of a Leibstandarte officer. On the left sleeve are the SS-style national insignia (eagle and swastika), and the LAH's Adolf Hitler script cufftitle. The ribbon of his Iron Cross 2nd Class is displayed in the lapel button-hole; the pin-back Iron Cross 1st Class, together with the Panzer Battle Badge and the black Wound Badge, on his left breast. His Ritterkreuz hangs at the throat from its ribbon passing under the shirt collar.

The black vehicle uniform trousers

Rudolf Hirschel, Heinrich Reimers, and two crewmen who could not be positively identified, still buried beside the N158. They lie today in the large German war cemetery at La Cambe, Normandy (block 47, row 3, grave 120).

The author and editor acknowledge the published researches of Jean-Paul Pallud and Eric Lefevre: see 'Panzers in Normandy. Then and Now' (After the Battle Ltd., Plaisance, 1983); and of Mr. L. Taylor, into the activities of 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry on 8 August 1944. The gunner of the Firefly credited with the destruction of Wittmann's tank survived the war, and his name has been published elsewhere; but he has let it be known that he prefers anonymity and does not regard the taking of life as matter for boasting.

are bloused over standard issue Wehrmacht marching boots; he wears issue grey woollen gloves, and an Army officer's field service belt with frame buckle (the round-buckled SS type was uncommon in use). Note that his front teeth are missing, knocked out when he slammed his face against the cupola.

(Bottom) Michael Wittmann as SS-Obersturmführer, commanding 2. Kompanie, schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 101 at Evrecy, Normandy, on 22 June 1944 — the day he was decorated by 'Sepp' Dietrich with the Swords to his Knight's Cross with Oakleaves. He was promoted SS-Hauptsturmführer on the same day, but still wears his first lieutenant's rank insignia in (unretouched) photographs taken after the presentation.

The war correspondent who interviewed Wittmann described 'a black leather jacket and blue lightweight mechanic's trousers' (blaue, leichte Monteurosen). The portrait photos taken on that day clearly show a dark, lightweight garment worn between the shirt and the jacket, with the Knight's Cross with Swords and Oakleaves suspended at its closed throat, and with soft collar patches (i.e. without buckram backing) attached to it, crumpling with the fall of the collar. Since this is clearly not the black Panzer vehicle uniform, the correspondent's description may logically be understood to refer to a dark blue overall — a perfectly feasible non-regulation garment for a front-line crewman.

The cap is the black Panzer version of the 1943 Einheitsfeldmütze, of single-button 'Dachau manufacture' type, with two-piece Belts weave insignia. The black leather jacket is taken from photos and a surviving example; although most 'U-boat leathers' are grey, all sources agree that the complete leather uniforms worn by some SS Panzer units and individuals in France were black, and were taken from naval stores at Kiel; one source states that they were made originally for the Italian navy.

# Michael Wittmann



Russia, 14 January 1944



Normandy, 22 June 1944